

HALESOWEN CHRONICLE



Thursday, March 5, 2015

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Bus lanes scrapped to combat congestion

BUS lanes in Halesowen will be permanently axed in a bid to cut congestion in the town centre.

The move follows calls from ward councillors and residents to scrap the lanes in Bromsgrove Road and westbound on Queensway.

However, the Queensway eastbound lane will remain in place for buses as bosses said it has helped to cut journey times.

They said a 12-month trial had shown there were no benefits of having the other lanes for buses.

Concerns have also been raised about the lanes causing long traffic queues around the town centre.

It will cost Dudley Council £2,500 to remove them and open them up to all traffic.

Residents have long called for the bus lanes to be scrapped, saying they cause traffic queues, particularly during the morning and evening rush hours.

Halesowen North councillor Karen Shakespeare said she supported the decision to axe the lanes saying it would benefit drivers.

"We've been calling for this for a long time. I don't think these bus lanes have worked in Halesowen."

"At times they have caused more congestion rather than helping the situation."

Drivers face night delays

EIGHT nights of roadworks will begin on a main route near Stourbridge on Monday, March 23.

Motorists face disruption while resurfacing work takes place on the A491 Stourbridge Road, West Hagley.

A section of the route will be closed at night from West Hagley to the junction with the A4036 Ham Lane roundabout.

It will be shut between 8pm and 6am. Diversions will be in place along the A456 Birmingham Road.

PARENTS' JOY OVER U-TURN

PARENTS and care staff have spoken of their relief after plans to axe free transport for children with special needs in Dudley were shelved.

Dudley Council originally proposed the service for children attending specialist nurseries be cut as part of its budget proposals for 2015/16.

But the scheme has been withdrawn following consultations with parents and the tabling of an amendment by the borough's Conservative group at a full council meeting this week. The controlling Labour group accepted the amendment and it was passed by councillors.

A review looking at how pre-school services are delivered in the borough will now take place.

Parents attending the full council meeting cheered as they heard the amendment had been supported.

Parent Hayley Welbourne, of Halesowen, who has two youngsters with autism, said: "This is wonderful news and will be a relief for all the parents affected."

"Everyone grouped together to fight this plan and have worked extremely hard raising awareness. This is a vital service."

Stress

"I want to thank everyone who has supported us."

Fellow campaigner Rachel Gardener, from the We Love Carers group, said: "This shows that councillors have listened to parents."

"It is just a shame it came this far — all the way to the meeting itself. It has caused a lot of stress for families."

Jayne Sinden, a teacher with Dudley Specialist Early Years Service, said: "At least the service will now

By Lee Watton

continue into the future. People have been very supportive and we would like to thank them."

Cabinet member for children's services Councillor Tim Crumpton said: "We have made it clear from the outset that no child would be denied access to these nurseries because of money and that we would continue to provide support where needed."

"We know we need to look at the service in a wider context and this may involve re-modelling it to ensure everyone has access to these much valued services."

"This doesn't take away the fact that due to the continued cuts to our funding we will need to make savings but by reviewing all aspects of the service we will be exploring to see how this can be achieved."

The council is not legally required to provide the transport.

The budget, which included a freeze on council tax, was agreed by the full council with 36 councillors voting for it to be passed, 18 abstaining and nine voting no.

Councillors were told that the authority was still on track to deliver £1 million savings due to an ongoing management restructure.

Veteran fan Jack honoured at match



Lifelong Albion fan Jack Jones, aged 107, is presented with a signed ball by West Brom skipper Darren Fletcher

A BAGGIES fan who recently celebrated his 107th birthday was given the VIP treatment at the Hawthorns and was presented with a special personalised shirt with the number 107.

Jack Jones, who is one of the oldest men in the country, was given the gift as he watched his beloved Albion beat Southampton 1-0 on Saturday.

Jack, who has followed Albion since he was 12, said the gift was "absolutely out of this world."

He met Albion captain Darren Fletcher and Baggies legend Tony 'Bomber' Brown and was presented with a personalised shirt — 'Jack 107' — and a signed ball mounted in a glass case. He was also given a signed shirt from the players which his Stourbridge care home will auction to raise funds.

"It's been a pleasure to meet everybody," he said. "I just want to thank everybody. It was absolutely out of this world."

Former lorry driver Jack, a resident at Tudor Manor care home, made parts for planes during the Second World War.

He said he has been a Baggies fan all his life and still keeps up with the club now, although his last trip to the Hawthorns was several years ago.

Albion captain Darren Fletcher said the team were honoured to have Jack at the game.

"Jack said he was humbled and honoured to have been here but having met him it's us who should be humbled and honoured."

"It was a real privilege to meet him and I'm so glad he was able to see us win."

Nischa Pritchard, care manager of Tudor Manor, said: "Jack says it was about five or six years since he last came to a game. We know he's been a fan of Albion since he was 12 years old. He follows them closely."

£2m for expansion of services at hospital

UP to £2 million will be spent expanding services at a Black Country hospital.

Bosses at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust want to offer a wider range of clinics and facilities at Rowley Regis Hospital.

They say it will mean more people can get regular treatment closer to home rather than having to travel to Sandwell Hospital or Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley.

A consultation is under way with residents to find out what services they would like to be available at the site in Moor Lane.

Ideas put forward so far include a pharmacy, midwifery services, such as antenatal and postnatal clinics, and respiratory therapy.

Improved gym facilities and space for support groups to help patients and families have also been suggested.

Chief executive Toby Lewis said up to £3m had been spent redeveloping the hospital during the past two years and now the trust expected to invest a further £1m to £2m by 2016.

Mr Lewis said that by expanding the range of services they could stop patients having to travel to larger sites for follow-up appointments or long-term treatment.

Most get first choice school

LATEST figures show 2,809 children, around 82 per cent, were able to get in to their first choice secondary school in Dudley.

But that meant one in five pupils failed to secure places at their preferred secondary schools in September. A total of 298 got their second choice, while 70 students got their third choice school.

Dudley councillor Tim Crumpton, in charge of children's services, said it was 'inevitable' some were disappointed.



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Community groups get use of civic hall

BRIERLEY Hill Civic Hall could be opened up to community groups during the day under plans to boost visitor numbers.

Bosses at charity Dudley Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) also want to increase the number of shows and events the venue.

Chief executive Andy Gray said he believed there was potential for the hall to be used more during the

day. At the moment it is mostly open in the evenings.

He said: "There's so much potential for Brierley Hill Civic Hall to become home to many more groups and activities, particularly during the daytime."

"We want to encourage local talent to use the Civic Hall to showcase their skills."

A consultation event was held

earlier this week for those interested in hosting activities at the venue.

The hall attracts thousands of visitors each year. Dudley Council transferred its day-to-day management to Dudley CVS to save money on running costs.

Libraries

The authority is also looking into whether community groups could

also take over the management of Dudley Town Hall, Stourbridge Town Hall and the Cornbow in Halesowen along with libraries in the borough.

Dudley CVS is an independent organisation that supports, promotes and develops voluntary groups across the borough. The agreement between the CVS and council is on an 18-month trial basis.

Landlord battles store plan for pub car park

A LANDLORD is battling plans to build a convenience store on the car park of his pub in Wollescote.

The Hare & Hounds Inn, in Wynnall Lane, was among a number of pubs sold by Marston's and has been taken on by property investment firm New River Retail.

While bosses from the company say they do not want to close the pub, they are working on plans to build a Co-operative store on part of the car park.

Landlord Lee Sargeant, 45, said if it went ahead, the development would leave him with just six car parking spaces and would effectively kill his trade.

He said at busy times as many as 50 spaces could be filled by customers.

Mr Sargeant, who has run the pub for three years, said: "They have offered me six car parking spaces, which is simply not enough. We are a very busy pub. This would put the pub at serious risk."

He added: "This is also our family home and we do not want to lose it. I have got five children and they all go to schools around here. If we were to lose the pub it would mean uprooting everyone."

He is being supported by West Midlands UKIP Euro MPs James Carver and Bill Etheridge, who launched their party's Save Our Pubs campaign.

New River Retail defended the plan which they said would create 20 jobs.

A spokesman said: "We have been very open with the licensee about the draft plans. Our objective is to retain the pub and introduce a new store which we believe will improve local shopping choice, create new jobs and attract more visitors to the site."

"No planning application has been finalised yet and we will take steps to inform the local community when it is submitted."

People are concerned the pub will cause more noise and nuisance in the area and have an impact on nearby homes.

They also say it will be out of character for the High Street and they are concerned about the hours of operation.

Support

But there has also been an e-mail of support sent to the council saying the scheme would convert unoccupied premises and put a pub back into the community of Quarry Bank.

The building, which is empty and partially boarded up, has two storeys with a gabled roof and an extension dating back to 1960s, which is used as a function room.

In a report to planners, officers said the building is in the heart of the town where it would be expected to find a range of shops, takeaways, homes and pubs.

Tennis club courts get revamp



Coach Nikki Parkes with members of the Prosser Tennis Academy at Quarry Bank Tennis Club

A CLUB is hoping its new courts will encourage new members. Quarry Bank Tennis Club, at Talbotts Lane, recently overhauled three of its four courts.

It will hold an open day for prospective new members on Sunday. The club, which celebrated its centenary in 2013, currently has just over 120 members.

Club chairman Steve Jasper, of Wollaston, said: "We wanted to be able to ensure we could go on for another hundred years and look forward to a very bright future."

"Our courts had started to become a bit rough around the edges, so we formed a committee to look at how we could improve them, which led to this work."

The courts will be officially reopened at the event on Sunday. "I am very pleased with the results," added Mr Jasper. "The courts look fantastic. I have played on them myself and they have a nice even bounce."

The club is open to all ages with young children learning to play at it's tennis academy.

£20m to be spent on Merry Hill centre

THE owner of Merry Hill aims to spend £20 million on improvements to the shopping centre over the next three years, expanding stores and introducing new restaurants.

Intu, which took over the centre last spring, also wants Merry Hill to open later in the evening.

It currently shuts at 9pm weekdays and 7pm on Saturdays, while Intu's sites at Trafford Centre and Lakeside, in Thurrock, are open until 10pm weekdays and 9pm on Saturdays.

Latest figures show the centre made a profit of £63.9m last year. Intu, which bought Westfield's 50 per cent stake in April, will see £31.9m of that.

Intu aims to attract more major retail chains to its Black Country site and its latest report to investors reveals it is planning to spend £20m on 'reconfiguring' Merry Hill. The company says it has been 'encouraged' by initial discussions with key retailers about 'opportunities to upsize their presence in the centre'.

Intu wants to reduce the number of smaller shops at the Brierley Hill complex and encourage existing tenants to take more space and to attract other big names.

Concert for two charities

TICKETS are still on sale for a concert on Saturday which will raise money for two Black Country charities.

Members of Brierley Hill Musical Theatre Group will stage the event at Brierley Hill Civic Hall on Saturday, March 7.

Money raised will go to Action Heart and The Leukaemia Appeal Fund.

Tickets for the concert, which starts at 7.30pm, cost £8. They are available from Action Heart on (01384) 292235 or The Action Heart Centre at Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley.

Libraries closed

ALL of Dudley borough's 17 libraries will close for the day on Monday, March 9, it's been announced.

Dudley Council said the branches would be shut for the day due to a staff conference and apologised for any inconvenience caused to the public.

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Demand still exists for police front desk

POLICE stations being closed to the public or having hours reduced have been seeing hundreds of people per day.

West Midlands Police is closing front desks across the Black Country to save money, saying there was 'little demand' from the public in the evening and overnight.

Campaigners say football figures show there is still a need for police station front desks in town centres, with some seeing as many as 393 people over a 24-hour period.

Dudley North MP Ian Austin said it showed there was still a need for a police station to be open to the public in the town. Dudley alone, which is only open from 10am to 6pm, recorded 134 people over a 40 hour period.

Mr Austin said: "These figures show that Dudley is a busy police station. We've been given a stay of execution but we have to step up our campaign if we are going to keep it open."

Halesowen and Stourbridge station desks, which closed last weekend, saw 63 and 64 people respectively over 40 hours. Brierley Hill front desk will stay open, with reduced hours, and saw 326 people over 120 hours.

Teen charged over stabbing

A TEENAGER has appeared in court accused of attempted murder after a man aged 65 was stabbed in the head in Dudley.

The 17-year-old appeared at Wolverhampton Magistrates on Saturday.

The victim was attacked on a doorstep on Owen Street, Kates Hill on Tuesday.

The teenager, who cannot be named due to his age, is also charged with burglary.

The case was adjourned to Wolverhampton Youth Court today (Thursday).

He was remanded in custody.

Sixth form day

A SIXTH form centre in Dudley town centre is holding its next open day on Saturday, March 14.

Dudley Sixth in Ednam Road will be opening its doors between 10am and 2pm. The centre offers AS and A-level courses. See www.dudleysixth.co.uk

Fears grow over worsening bed blocking crisis

CUTS to NHS and council budgets and a lack of facilities for elderly people are the root causes of the bed blocking crisis plaguing the West Midlands, say health bosses.

As hospitals struggle to cope with increasing admissions and dwindling budgets, fears are being raised that the situation is only going to get worse.

A charity campaigning for older people's care says pensioners often have nowhere to go after hospital, so end up staying much longer than they should. They often have to

wait for space in care homes or for adaptations to be fitted at their homes by councils.

The Royal Voluntary Service says urgent action is needed. Chief executive David McCullough said: "This winter we've seen delays in hospital discharge reach unprecedented levels with lack of support for older people after hospital a root cause."

"While additional funding has been allocated in some areas to address the crisis, many authorities and hospital trusts are still facing budget cuts."

Dudley North MP Ian Austin blames Government cuts for the system becoming clogged and argues it will soon come to a grinding halt unless a solution is found. He is raising the issue with ministers.

"Local Government spending cuts are leaving councils unable to move patients out of hospitals quickly enough," he said. "This is a huge crisis and we need to integrate health and social care and get the councils and NHS working together."

Hospital bosses say they start planning

for a patient's discharge as soon as they are admitted. Backlogs start when assessments by social care workers are delayed.

Councillor Dave Branwood, Dudley's social care boss, said: "Admissions into Rus-sells Hall saw a huge spike in December and early January. To speed up discharges at the other end social care staff are working at the hospital seven days a week. It's credit to them that despite huge demand, the system held strong and patients have been discharged as soon as safely possible."

More evictions as debts grow after 'bedroom tax'

SIXTY council tenants were evicted in just nine months after falling behind on their rent payments in Dudley.

The figure for the period April 1 to December 31, 2014, was slightly higher than the 56 cases during the same period in the previous 12 months.

Around £1.5million is currently owed by council tenants across the borough — up by 29 per cent on 2012/13.

The council said the number of families finding themselves in arrears had increased since the introduction of the controversial 'bedroom tax'.

But the authority's interim chief officer for housing, Ron Sims, said eviction was always a last resort when all other avenues to get the owed money had been pursued.

"Considerable work is carried out to try and avoid the need for action to recover the possession of a home," he said.

Exhausted

"Evictions are only pursued as a last resort when all other action to secure payment of rent has been exhausted."

Recent figures show almost 349 council tenants across Dudley borough have moved to smaller homes to avoid a cut in housing benefits since the bedroom tax started in April 2013. The figures include older residents who have decided to downsize but are not affected by the benefit cut.

The council has been offering additional support to families struggling to make ends meet and advice is available to those finding it difficult to make payments.

Net gain for library visitors

PEOPLE can get tips for surfing the web at a drop-in event today (Thursday) at Stourbridge Library.

Dudley Council is running the session aimed at helping people make the most of using the internet from 10am to 2pm.

Library staff will be on hand to share a range of information and demonstrate how to research family history, use social media, set up and use email and more.

By Heather Large

Under welfare reforms, anyone in council or social rented housing faces a 14 per cent or 25 per cent cut in their housing benefit if they have one or more spare bedrooms, meaning families potentially paying hundreds of pounds extra a year in rent unless they move to a smaller home. The bedroom tax is also known as under occupancy charge or the spare room subsidy.

Figures for December last year show the council was owed £1.5m in unpaid rent payments, compared with £1.1m in December 2013.

Mr Sims said: "The figures show that the current arrears levels for the borough has increased since the implementation of the 'removal of the spare room subsidy' and the benefit cap in 2013."

The council has been offering additional support to families struggling to make ends meet and advice is available to those finding it difficult to make payments.



David Brownhill of the festival committee with, right, Pete Lowe, leader of Dudley Council

Festival is up for national award

THE Black Country flag will fly in London after the organisers of last year's successful Black Country Festival were shortlisted for a prestigious national award.

The festival is in the running for the community engagement campaign of the year award, which is handed out to public and private sector projects, at the PR-moments Awards 2015.

Organisers were going up against competitors such as Aldi and Barclays at the ceremony in London yesterday (Wednesday).

The festival was organised by Dudley Council in partnership with the community.

Councillor Pete Lowe, leader of the council, said: "For the work we carried out last year to be recognised at a national level in this way really is true recognition of what a fantastic achievement the first ever Black Country Festival was."

"We worked closely with the community to support them and ensure we had a month-long festival of events to show pride in where we are from."

"This news has given us all a boost as we start preparations to make the 2015 festival even bigger and better."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Titanic's history panels go ahead

TWO interpretation panels on the history of the Titanic anchor will be installed in Netherton after plans were given the go-ahead by councillors.

The boards will stand by the 16-ton anchor replica to inform visitors about the town's heritage. The first panel will detail the history of the original anchor commissioned for the ill-fated ocean liner in 1911 and forged by Netherton firm Hingley. The second will detail the story of the replica, created for a Channel 4 documentary looking at the ship's construction.

Lucky escape as car rolls in ditch

FOUR people had a lucky escape when the car they were travelling in left the road and ended up on its side in a ditch in Dudley.

Police and fire crews were called to the incident at Dudley Road in Pensnett at about 12.30am on Saturday morning.

The green Volkswagen Polo was badly damaged. Watch Commander Danny Hines from Brierley Hill Fire Station said: "The occupants managed to get out of the car but there were no serious injuries."

Choir in concert with a folk group

A CHORAL concert at a Black Country church will also feature a folk group.

In Sound Company community choir will perform Like a Singing Bird on Saturday at St John's Church, Stourbridge, at 7.30pm.

The music ranges from Hungarian folk tunes to musical theatre numbers.

Folk group Stourfolk will support the choir and join them for the finale. Tickets £6 will be on the door.

Banjo Dan's date at the marina

A RENOWNED banjoist will bring his UK wide tour to Dudley.

Dan Walsh, who is preparing to release his latest album, Incidents and Accidents, will play at the Woodman Folk Club at Ashwood Marina in Kingswinford on March 13. Tickets are priced £6.

To book, call (01384) 560462.

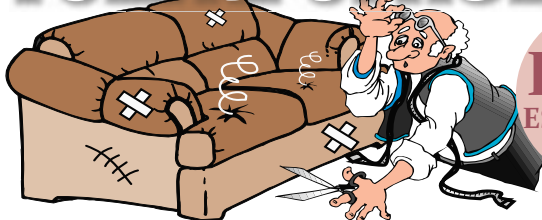
Flowers for charity

A FLOWER club will raise cash for Mary Stevens Hospice by selling floral arrangements for Mother's Day. Members of Halesowen Flower Club will be in Halesowen town centre from 9am on March 14.

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



NO, I'm not a racist. I just like throwing black people off trains. The more we learn about the Chelsea fans in the Paris Metro, the stranger it gets.

FOR 800 years the Black Death has been blamed on rats. Now, scientists in Norway believe the plague was spread by gerbils, not rats. We are collectively guilty of eight centuries of historic rat abuse. It is time for royal pardons, an apology in Parliament, compensation and a full public inquiry with a sympathetic chairman. Over to you, Roland.

THE most wince-making moment in Malcolm Rifkind's chat with bogus lobbyists is when he declares that, because he is a former foreign secretary, he can arrange "useful access" to ambassadors everywhere. I doubt it. There is nothing as ex as an ex-minister. Ambassadors want to talk to today's supreme, not yesterday's man. Messrs Rifkind and Straw might get invited to the ambassador's party — but only to hand out the sweeties. Why, Malcolm, you are spoiling us with these Ferrero Rocher.

BACK in 1969 the hit by Blue Mink, Melting Pot, was the last word in politically-correct sentiment, cheerfully looking forward to a time when all the races would be mixed into one coffee-coloured world. Part of the blend would be "Curly Latin kinkies, mixed with yellow Chinkies." A few days ago, the local radio station BBC Three Counties played a few lines of Melting Pot before presenter Iain Lee warned listeners: "I think it might be a little bit racist now" and pulled it. The mistake we always make is assuming that today's progressive attitudes are the last word and will endure for ever. They won't. Just as we winced at Melting Pot, so our grandchildren will be horrified at the things people said and did back in 2015. Today's well-meaning liberals are tomorrow's figures of scorn.

JOHN Prescott's promotion to become Ed Miliband's climate-change boss reinforces my hunch that Labour is aiming to win the General Election with the votes of people who cannot remember anything that happened more than five years ago.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Big Centre TV channel shows old Crossroads

DODGY sound, a row over Crossroads royalties and a launch show that was more corporate video than glitz and glamour — the newest Freeview TV channel dedicated to the West Midlands has not exactly got off to the smoothest of starts.

Big Centre TV's idea of a big opening night consisted of interviews with some of its executives sitting in front of their computers and discussing a business plan before the station was blessed by a clergyman.

Veteran broadcaster Bob Hall's news bulletin on Saturday was filmed by a camera that seemed to have zoomed out as far as it would go until someone realised and hit the button in a panic.

And the sound was, at some stages, so poor it may as well have been filmed with a hairdryer by the microphone.

But some teething problems are inevitable, particularly given that it has only been three months since bosses were told they even had a licence, let alone having what they needed in place to be up and running seamlessly.

And for all the glitches, there are currently a lot of young and keen people cutting their teeth in an increasingly competitive profession, making programmes in the West Midlands instead of in the

media metropolis of Manchester or in London, which has always gobbled up the lion's share. It also promotes local musicians, giving them an audience and reach they would never have had otherwise.

Big Centre, which is based in Walsall's Goldmine Centre, is funded mostly by adverts.

It is not the mighty BBC, with its obligatory television licence fee pumping millions into programmes and promoting itself, lavishing huge salaries on its talent or attending news stories en masse.

Nor is trying to be. It is a group of people finding their feet on the rather prominent position of Channel 8 on the Freeview network.

Big Centre has acquired 3,000 episodes of the classic Midlands soap, Crossroads and shows it three times a day.

By Daniel Wainwright

Club pro to coach at Open



Open season — Jamie Cundy at Dudley Golf Club

A GOLFER is looking forward to rubbing shoulders with some of the game's biggest stars after being chosen to coach at the Open Championship.

Jamie Cundy will be heading to the prestigious tournament at St Andrews, the only one of golf's majors which held on British soil, in the summer.

The 46-year-old professional, who joined Dudley Golf Club, based in Rowley Regis, last September, will coach spectators during free sessions as the top players compete for the Claret Jug.

Mr Cundy has competed in regional tours during almost three decades playing the sport. It will be the third consecutive year he has coached at the Open.

He said: "Tim Henman came up for a lesson, but he was pretty good so he didn't need much teaching."

The father-of-two from Edgbaston added: "It is an amazing experience. Last year at Hoylake in Liverpool we saw some of the pros arrive in the evening and bumped into Robbie Williams and George Clooney in the bar."

Frank new role for Lenny in Rita play

ACTOR and comedian Lenny Henry will star in a new stage version of Educating Rita — a play made famous on screen by his Black Country actor Julie Walters.

The Dudley-born comic and actor will take on the role of Frank, who was played by Michael Caine in the 1983 film.

The play gave Julie, who grew up in Smethwick, her big break when writer Willy Russell asked her to star on stage and she then went on to play Rita in the much-loved film alongside Caine.

Brilliant

Lenny, aged 56, will be performing at the Chichester Theatre Festival from June 18 until July 25.

He said: "Frank is a fantastic, brilliant role and I have always loved the movie with Michael Caine and Julie Walters."

The new version of Educating Rita is being directed by Michael Buffong, artistic director of theatre company Talawa.

Lenny's latest role follows his performance in Rudy's Rare Records at Birmingham Rep last September.

Lenny won an award for his portrayal of Othello for Northern Broadbairds and completed an acclaimed tour and West End season in August Wilson's award-winning Fences.

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Thousand fail to get preferred school

ONE in four children in Sandwell have failed to secure a place at their first choice secondary school, according to the latest figures.

Some 74 per cent of pupils had been allocated a place at their preferred school this September – leaving around 1,000 youngsters disappointed.

A total of 425 pupils were instead offered a place at the school put down as their second choice, while 187 got their third favourite choice. More than 350 children – 10 per cent – were not offered a place at any of their top three schools.

Parents across the country found out on Monday which schools their children would be going to on what was dubbed National Offer Day. The number of children accepted at their first choice school in Sandwell is below the national average of 85 per cent.

Council bosses said desired schools in the borough were oversubscribed.

A council spokesman said: "Parents can put down six schools in Sandwell, so the number who got either first, second or third is quite high."

"While one in four didn't get their first school, nearly 90 per cent got one of their top three. Some schools are heavily subscribed, which affects the outcome. We would also remind parents there is an appeals process."

Council tax frozen but tougher times are coming

COUNCIL tax in Dudley has been frozen for another year, but councillors have warned of difficult times ahead as Government funding continues to fall.

Dudley Council approved what is described as a 'very difficult budget' at a full meeting this week. The authority will have to make savings of £22.1 million in 2015/16 rising to £24.3m in 2016/17 and £26.3m in 2017/18.

By Lee Watton

But officials have warned this will still leave a further gap of £32.7m which will need to be addressed by 2017/18.

A total of 36 councillors voted in favour of the budget, with 18 abstaining and nine voting against proposals.

While controversial plans to axe free transport for special needs children were shelved, to the delight of campaigners, other plans – including proposals to increase charges for sports pitches – were included.

Finance boss Councillor Stuart Turner said in 2010/11 the council was receiving more than £196m of grant funding, but said by next year the equivalent funding will have fallen below £130m.

The meeting was told the authority is on track to save £1m due to the ongoing management restructuring, although some said savings would be far less when costs are taken into account.

Councillor Turner said it would not be a one-off saving but would be ongoing year on year.

"Yes there will be costs but they will be one-off payments which have been accounted for," he said.

Conservative group leader Councillor Patrick Harley said the council could no longer rely on Government grants and had to look at ways of raising money through its own initiative.

He suggested commercialisation of some council services, such as construction or environment projects.

"The council needs to show real ambition and leadership and that is lacking in this budget," he said.

UKIP councillor Paul Brothwood put forward amendments, including axing the post of chief executive, but these were rejected.

Harriet's pink bus rolls into town



Deputy Labour Party Leader Harriet Harman talks to women in Netherton beside her pink bus

HARRIET Harman said women had been 'hit the hardest' by Government cuts as she urged them to vote at the General Election as part of her whistle-stop tour of the Black Country.

Labour's deputy leader rolled into Netherton and Halesowen in her controversial pink battle bus this week.

She met with a group of 20 women at the Savoy Centre before meeting shoppers in Halesowen High Street and the Crossbow Shopping Centre.

Difference

She said: "There was more than 700,000 women in this region who did not vote in the General Election last time – many because they do not have the confidence or faith in the system."

"We are going out with our bus to ask women what is important to them and how Labour can make a difference."

She warned that further Government cuts would see spending go back to 1930s levels and said there was still a big equality gap between men and women.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Brierley Hill war memorial is listed

THE importance of a war memorial in Brierley Hill has been recognised after it was awarded grade II listed status.

The memorial at the top of Church Hill which features a statue of a soldier has been given the status based on its historic and sculptural value. A report from English Heritage said it was an 'eloquent witness to the tragic impacts of world wars on the community and the sacrifices made in conflicts'.

The memorial was unveiled in 1921, three years after the end of the First World War. The figure on top of the pedestal is based on photographs of Stanley Harley, the first Brierley Hill man to be awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Pallet blaze at a derelict factory

ARSONISTS are responsible for a fire at a derelict factory in Rowley Regis.

Fire crews were called to the factory on Doulton Road shortly after 4pm on Sunday.

Watch Commander Justin Bayliss, from Haden Cross, said: "Somebody had obviously broken into the building and set fire to some pallets inside. We have been to this building three or four times in the past few years. We were able to put the fire out swiftly."

"We always like to repeat that it is dangerous to play around in derelict factories."

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews

A GROUP of around 200 of us stood in the driving rain on a cold night, but there was not a word of complaint.

Most of the crowd were made up of teenagers, who are not noted for being early risers, but there was not a murmur of dissent about having had to get up at 3.30 in the morning.

There is something about Auschwitz which puts our every-day moans into perspective.

Last week, the Holocaust Educational Trust took a party of youngsters from schools across the West Midlands to the notorious Nazi death camp in Poland, and it was a privilege to be able to join them.

Today, many of us think we are reasonably well informed about what went on, but it is only when you stand in the locations where so many people came about their deaths that you can possibly comprehend the enormity of it all.

Holocaust

The scratch marks in the gas chambers, which had been designed to look like shower blocks, where the victims of the Holocaust would have tried to cling to life as they breathed their last.

The masses of human hair, mercilessly shaven from the prisoners to make the lining of soldiers' trousers.

The clinical, Germanic efficiency, which saw every item of the victims' possessions fastidiously sorted and steam cleaned before being redistributed to new owners who were considered more in keeping with National Socialist ideals.

It is too much to try to understand how anybody's conscience would allow them to behave in this way, but everybody should visit Auschwitz at least once in their life.

□□□□

WHEN it was reported that new laws would be coming into force this week introducing new limits for drivers taking cough medicine it seemed bizarre.

To be honest my initial thought was it was just another example of politicians and police chiefs hammering motorists for that heinous crime – that is of just driving a car.

Yes we all know these things can make you a little drowsy, but stopping people at the side of the road, asking them if they have been taking cough mixture?

"Hello, hello, hello, is that Benylin I can smell on your breath, sir?"

But to be fair to the Old Bill, it seems they are not looking for people who take these substances for medicinal purposes. Apparently, there are people who take prescription medicine in large quantities just for the enjoyment of it.

The idiocy of mankind never ceases to amaze.



The statue of the Slasher at Coronation Gardens, Tipton



The fighter gets the better of one of his opponents



Chris Smith has a written a book on the Tipton Slasher

Slasher book is packing a punch

LEE WATTON talks to an author who has written all about the legendary Tipton Slasher, William Perry

DESPITE his fame as one of the Black Country's sporting greats, the life of boxer William Perry, better known as the Tipton Slasher, has remained largely a mystery.

It was this which spurred author Chris Smith to painstakingly piece together the renowned fighter's story – and debunk some of the myths surrounding him.

After three years research the book, called Slasher – the True Story of William Perry, the Tipton Slasher, was launched at Tipton Library on Saturday.

Mr Smith, aged 61, from Gornal, said his quest had involved hours of research using the British Newspaper Archive and time hunting through old boxing books and periodicals. But he quickly found his efforts hampered by a number of impostors who had passed themselves off as the Tipton Slasher at the height of the real boxer's fame.

Mr Smith said: "The information itself took a long time to piece together and wasn't helped by the number of people who took to calling themselves the Tipton Slasher.

"For example there was one chap called Hopkinson, who was arrested and charged with poaching around 30 times. He called himself the Tipton Slasher but was, obviously, an impostor."

But Mr Smith said while sifting the information had been difficult, it had been a 'hugely rewarding challenge' which revealed a rags-to-riches and back-to-rags tale. The author said he had been inspired to write the book because while the majority of people knew of the Tipton Slasher, very few knew his life story.



The Tipton Slasher, William Perry, whose personal life has remained a mystery

"If you were to walk down any street in the Black Country and asked people if they had heard of the Slasher, I think its fair to say most would have," he said. "However ask them about any details of his life and they would be struggling. It is not often you encounter a figure who is so well-known but at the same time a mystery."

His research has uncovered a number of intriguing stories, including the Slasher's encounters with literary giants Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray along with the

highest paid actress of the age Adah Menken. It charts his birth in Park Lane, Tipton, in 1819 and his early life working on the region's network of canals. His parents, Timothy and Sarah Perry, also worked on boats.

The book reveals by the age of 16, Perry had moved to London and worked as a navvy – a tough life constructing canals and railways. It was here his legend was first forged when he took on, and defeated, an Irishman called Barney Dogherty in a bare-knuckle fight which attracted a crowd of almost a

thousand. Afterwards, Perry returned to the Midlands beating champions from Birmingham and Gornal. He was taken on by a less-than-reputable manager called Johnny Broome who arranged a contest with American fighter Charles Freeman, who at the time was being touted as 'Champion Of The World'.

Although Perry lost the bout, he gained a reputation as a pugilist capable of taking on and beating the best fighters.

During his career, he was twice crowned champion of England and became the toast of nobility and even royalty.

But all this was to change when his winning streak came to an end and he lost his title to a fighter named Tom Sayers, of Brighton.

It proved to be a double blow for Perry as not only did he lose the championship, he had also bet nearly all his possessions on winning the bout. Although not destitute, he lost the vast majority of his belongings and was reduced to scraping a living back on the canals where he started during the last few years of his life.

Mr Smith said descriptions of Perry's fights had been published in several earlier books but this was the first time his life away from the ring had been researched in any depth.

The author, who has written five books previously, said: "Because of the level of research this is the longest it has taken me to write a book from gestation to final publication.

"However it has been a very rewarding experience. I set out to not only chronicle William Perry's life in detail but also to disprove some of the myths which have built up around him.

The book is usually priced £8.99 but will be available at the reduced price of £7.50 at the launch at Tipton Library. Copies can be pre-ordered before the end of February at the same discount from the publishers Arcos Design, Gornal Wood.

WEEK IN POLITICS

with Daniel Wainwright

£67,000. That's a lot of money to get every year, isn't it? OK, it's not the salary Wayne Rooney would even bother to lace up his boots for. But it's still not a bad whack.

MPs have argued the toss over second jobs and whether or not they should be allowed to do them. It all seemed to stem from the sting on former Foreign Secretaries Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Jack Straw over 'cash for access'.

Labour will ban all its MPs from second jobs. Is that really necessary? What Sir Malcolm and Mr Straw are accused of is using their positions as MPs in return for money. Both deny any wrongdoing. And that's rather a far cry from what our MPs in the West Midlands do.

Aside from a few hundred quid here and there for appearances on TV and radio programmes, those who make money on the side do it in the professions they held before they became MPs.

Stone MP Sir Bill Cash, for example, made a tidy £25,000 doing 70 hours work as a solicitor. Stafford's Jeremy Lefroy made considerably less doing a few more hours in the African coffee, cocoa and management services company of which he is a director.

Property

Some MPs have a few shares. Others rent out a property here and there. It's not exactly the 2009 expenses scandal is it? But we know about it because the rules require them to declare all this in the Register of Members' Interests.

Ultimately MPs have to make sure they do their duty and serve their constituents. But is it any worse doing a bit of work here and there when Parliament's in recess when compared with being a minister? After all, those MPs carrying the red boxes and getting driven around in the Jaguars still have constituencies just like the backbenchers.

There's another reason, too, that I'd rather see people like Sir Bill and Mr Lefroy keep their hand in with their businesses. For a start it means they keep up their experience outside of the Westminster bubble.

There are enough MPs as it is who have been career politicians – going from university to some form of advisory role and then on to a candidacy – without limiting even further the things they can do. And with a General Election looming, if an MP in a marginal seat severed all ties with their old business I wouldn't think they were dedicated, I'd think they were mad.

□□□□

I'm going into self-imposed exile as the third series of the American version of House of Cards has been made available on Netflix. All the episodes are available at once. So I'm going to forget about the scheming in the Commons by watching the scheming in the White House.



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'Disgrace' to close unit

WITH reference to the article in last week's Express and Star and Dudley Chronicle, we write in support of the Speech and Language Unit at Hasbury.

As grandparents of a child who was fortunate enough to attend this unit and benefit from the excellent work done by Mrs Hemms and her team, we feel that closing this unit will deprive children who urgently need help with their communication skills and the chance to benefit as our grandchild did.

Children so easily get lost in the

mainstream system because teachers have so many other pupils to deal with.

The language unit at Hasbury work so much more closely with individual children and they benefit from this.

Our grandchild returned to full time mainstream school more than a year earlier than he was meant to because of the work that they did there. To close this facility just to save money is a disgrace.

M TURNER
Lower Gornal

Commuter trains are better than tram plan

WE have been waiting for 50 years for passenger trains to return to 13 miles of empty rail line from Stourbridge Junction to Wall-sall. Now Dudley Council is wanting to give one mile to a group to test their Very Light Rail tram idea. It will prevent for ever commuter trains calling at a re-opened station at Castle Hill. What is the point of spending £25m on a mile of tram line when for £200m we could have direct links to all the UK without having to go via New Street?

TIM WELLER
Halesowen

Get rid of 'hideous' ex-theatre

I HAVE been impressed by what Dudley MBC has achieved in regenerating the centre of the town and the improvements to the zoo, museum and canal tunnel leisure attractions. The construction of the light railway will further add to the establishment of Dudley as a tourist centre.

What a pity that when looking down from the zoo the view is marred by the hideous red brick cube that is the Hippodrome. Whatever is done or spent will be compromised by its presence. That the Hippodrome attracted famous names in the past is utterly irrelevant. The world has moved on. It has been empty for so long because no one could find an economically viable use for it. Let us get rid of it and in its place create a garden with trees and the statue of the Earl of Dudley as a centrepiece, without the generosity of the Earl there would be no zoo.

B OSBORNE
Dudley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
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51-53 Queen Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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Syria three not the fault of authorities

THREE teenage girls fly out to join IS in Syria and immediately there are questions asked as to why they weren't stopped by counter-terrorism officers.

In the CCTV pictures they are dressed in western clothes, and look like any other group of young people flying off on a holiday, after all Turkey is a favourite budget holiday destination as well as a route to Syria.

Can you imagine the reports in the press if any young people were stopped at the departure gate and held for questioning probably for a period of time, which would cause them to miss their flight, in order to be sure they were not travelling abroad for the wrong reasons?

Whilst having every sympathy with their families, once again it is the British way of passing the blame to the authorities which always happens. If the girls were being groomed on social media that is something that should have been picked up by family or friends.

These are public sites, we do not need MI5 to monitor these, they can be seen by almost anyone. Exit checks will be brought back after being scrapped in 1997, so delays will then be adding to the stress of airports.

R GWILLIAMS
Brierley Hill

Don't ditch appointment for the GP

I would like to comment on an article put in the Letters to the Editor page by J James who wants to go back to queuing system at the doctors surgeries.

I certainly wouldn't want to go back to the draconian days of first-come first-served when wanting to see my doctor. What could be any better than by appointment. If a person doesn't turn up for their appointment, the next one is called.

People who have appointment nearly always turn up 10 to 15 minutes before their appointment time, so I can't see the problem. I certainly wouldn't want to queue for what could be hours waiting to see the doctor. I have better things to do with my time. It is unfortunate that people who don't turn up for their appointment haven't taken the trouble to cancel. What should be done about broken appointments is another issue, let's keep the appointment system please.

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85,000 families face fuel poverty

MORE than 85,000 families in the Black Country and Staffordshire are living in fuel poverty and cannot afford to heat their homes, new figures reveal.

Campaigners have warned this could lead to 3,600 deaths.

Treating illnesses related to living in cold conditions could also cost the NHS £22 billion over that time, the National Energy Action-Charity said as it called for more efforts by the Government to help people struggling to heat their homes.

Fuel poverty is defined as being unable to afford to heat a home at reasonable cost.

The charity has also calculated that Black Country and Staffordshire residents contribute £60.4 million each year in tax from their energy bills.

Efficiency

The worst hit area is Sandwell, where there are 21,330 homes in fuel poverty, with Wolverhampton second at 18,316, then 18,129 in Dudley, 17,030 in Walsall, 6,772 in Stafford and 4,411 in Cannock Chase.

A report from the charity highlights that the Treasury will raise £28 billion in taxes on household electricity and gas bills over the next decade, and called for Government funds to improve domestic energy efficiency.

Some 4.5 million people are in fuel poverty across the UK, say campaigners.

Breast cancer surgery compensation protest

WOMEN who were treated by negligent breast surgeon Ian Paterson joined forces with MPs at a protest to voice their anger at delays to compensation payments.

Victims and their supporters chanted 'we want justice' outside Spire Parkway Hospital in Solihull.

The patients claim they were given unnecessary or rule-breaching breast surgeries at the private hospital by Mr Paterson. Some 50 protesters delivered an open letter to bosses calling on them to accept responsibility for Mr Paterson's allegedly negligent surgery.

Mr Paterson worked as a cancer surgeon at hospitals owned by the Heart of England NHS Trust and Spire Healthcare in the Midlands. Although the trust has already begun making payments to affected women, those who were treated at Spire Healthcare say they have not yet received compensation. The protesters were joined by Dudley-born Solihull MP Lorely Burt who is among politicians to raise the case with Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt and the Care Quality Commission.

It came hours after news that the Medical Defence Union told solicitors that its insurance will not cover Mr Paterson for his operations at private hospitals. Debbie Douglas, from Birmingham, underwent surgery with Mr Paterson at Spire Parkway in 2003, to be later told that the 'cleavage sparing' technique he used was against guidelines and could increase the risk of breast cancer returning.

She said: "We are here protesting to show how angry we are at Spire. It's been three years with no change in the status of the legal case. I have become close with a number of other affected patients and it's devastating to watch some of my friends' breast cancers return because of the treatment he gave them."

"Spire has made countless empty promises to us, but they have let us down time after time. We think we deserve better and we will not be ignored."

Mr Patterson was suspended by the General Medical Council in 2012 after being accused of performing 'cleavage sparing mastectomies' on women, an unrecognised procedure.

Thompsons Solicitors has pursued legal cases for hundreds of Mr Paterson's former patients.

By Peter Madeley

Baseball champs pitching for players



The Stourbridge Titans baseball team are looking for new members. Front is catcher and chairman Shaun Healy

A BASEBALL team is pitching for new players as it looks to defend its league crown.

Stourbridge Titans were champions last season and have begun preparations for the new campaign in the AA Central Division, which begins again in April.

They want to encourage more people in the Black Country to take up the game.

Member Stuart Walton, aged 32, a teacher at Windsor High School and Sixth Form, in Halesowen, has been

playing baseball with the Titans since 2011.

He said: "Since I've been part of it I've done nothing but enjoy myself."

"We've grown as a club and we can turn up to games without having to dig out the field."

League

"We won 15 of our 20 games, last year, winning the league. We have a very good team spirit."

Mr Walton was encouraged to join the team by founders Shaun Healy, a

former colleague, and Cory Millard, from Wollaston, a policeman, who created the team after playing for the Birmingham Maple Leafs for several years.

Training is usually either on Tuesday or Wednesday evenings, and on Sundays between 10am and 1pm before games, which are played at Gibson Field, set up at Thorns Community College, Quarry Bank.

Follow the club on Facebook.com/stourbridgetitans, twitter @StourTitans, or on their own youtube channel.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Search on for the oldest maths set

FOR generations of pupils the Helix Oxford Maths Set has been an essential accompaniment to their pencil case and text books.

The iconic blue-labelled tin of mathematical instruments has been present in classes for 80 years and now Black Country-based Mapped Helix is hoping to find the oldest surviving set. The firm is an official sponsor of National Stationery Week 2015 and will show the earliest tin at the event as a nod to its heritage. The owner of the oldest tin will receive a £50 voucher and £25 worth of stationery.

In 2012 Helix moved its HQ to the Pensnett Estate in Dudley. The 125-year-old business left its plant in Lye after French firm Mapped bought out the firm.

Expanding firm is taking on workers

A FIRM is expanding its workforce by 10 per cent due to continuing demand. Additional roles at Bird Stevens Manufacturing include new apprenticeships in administration and engineering. Together with skilled operatives in presswork, welding and assembly, it will take the workforce to 70 full time.

Based in Quarry Bank, the century-old firm was acquired by the existing management team in a buyout last year, and they say orders are coming in from the UK and Europe.

Director Nicola Price said the success was "a culmination of combining our traditional facilities with the latest high-tech equipment, coupled with innovation."



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SATURDAY, MARCH 14

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*subject to availability



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Write your message here. One word per box

Mother's Surname First Name

Circle the illustration of your choice



Name: Mother's Address:

Telephone Number: Postcode:

If you have selected an illustrated message, please enclose a cheque for £10, made payable to M.N.A. and sent to the address below.

Send to: Mother's Day Greetings, Classifieds, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1ES or call into your local Express & Star office. Deadline for messages is 11am, Friday, March 13, 2015.

Express & Star

Car shunted through wall in accident



The scene of destruction after the car was shunted through a brick wall in Stourbridge town centre

THIS is the aftermath when a car was shunted through a brick wall near the Tesco Extra store in Stourbridge town centre.

Bricks were left scattered across the entrance to the store's underground car park in after a Renault, which had been on the neighbouring Stourbridge Institute car park, smashed through the wall above after onlookers reported seeing a silver car shunt the unoccupied Renault through the wall.

Ambulance

The car that hit the Renault is believed to have been driven by an elderly man who had a passenger, neither of whom were badly injured.

The accident off Bell Street, opposite the Crystal Leisure Centre, happened around 12.45pm last Wednesday.

Suzie Wheaton, a spokeswoman West Midlands Ambulance Service, said: "There were two patients both of which were assessed and discharged at the scene.

"Neither required hospital treatment."

City festive market is a £400m attraction

MORE than five million people spent nearly £400 million at Birmingham's Christmas Markets – record figures for the hugely popular festive attraction.

The increasing success of the event, including its jam-packed traditional Frankfurt Christmas market serving up bratwursts and gluhwein, pulled in a record 5.5m visitors.

By Simon Penfold

That footfall figure is up 1.2m from 2012's market. This 28 per cent increase in visitor numbers contributed to a record consumer spend of £397m – nearly double the £201m generated in 2012 when figures were last calculated.

The city's hotel trade also benefited, with an average occupancy rate of 84 per cent during the Christmas Markets programme, up from 79 per cent in 2012.

Birmingham's festive offer in 2014 saw its Christmas Markets – the largest of their kind in the UK – attract visitors from across Europe.

Councillor Ian Ward, deputy leader of Birmingham City Council, said: "These record-breaking visitor numbers demonstrate the quality and wide appeal of Birmingham's Christmas Markets.

"Our extensive festive programme has drawn visitors from across the UK and Europe, all of whom have enjoyed the city's retail and events offer, as well as the famous Birmingham welcome."

"The positive figures form an excellent base for 2015, which is set to be one of Birmingham's most exciting periods in over a decade."

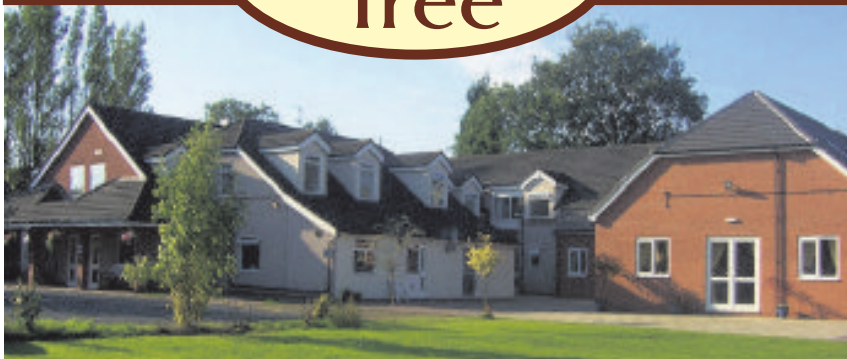
Birmingham is set to build upon the success of its Christmas Markets as it welcomes international visitors with a series of tourism trade delegations visiting the region in the first quarter of 2015.

Hopes are high for a major boost to local tourism as the region plays host to more than 50 leading travel trade leaders from India and Japan as part of ExploreGB.

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Having recently earned the national BIG Award for anti-bullying intervention work, we can give your child the secure and positive start to secondary education she or he needs. Recent parent surveys tell us that:

- **99%** feel that their child is safe in school
- **97%** say that their child is happy at school
- **97%** feel that their child is well taught
- **96%** say that their child makes good progress

In February 2015, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors for Schools said of Leasowes:

'Students were very clear that they were well supported to achieve their best and that they were challenged appropriately.'



They were particularly keen to emphasise that they could get help whenever they needed it and that they felt their teachers knew their needs well.'

With a major programme of refurbishment worth £1.2 million already underway and a similar sum committed in the next five years we are aiming high for the future. This, along with new HD tablet computers for all new starters in 2015, should ensure a flying start to the secondary experience!

Contact us directly on 01384 816285 if you feel we might be the right choice for your child.

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Interior design expert Julia Kendell on hand to offer advice

COMPETITION

Time to home in on advice from experts

THERE will be a larger than ever pool of hands-on property specialists to inspire visitors at The National Homebuilding & Renovating Show.

As the property market has strengthened over the past year, the updated National Homebuilding & Renovating Show, sponsored by Anglian Home Improvements, is returning in full force to the NEC, Birmingham from March 26-29 with a record number of more than 15 self-build, renovation and home improvement specialists.

And the organisers have teamed up with the Chronicle series to give 70 readers the chance to win a pair of tickets to the show.

Homeowners planning to undertake a house project such as remodelling, extending, constructing a new dwelling from scratch or revamping their

existing property will find more tailored inspiration and specialist guidance to pursue their plans than ever before.

Throughout the four days, visitors will have access to the latest products, services and innovations from more than 500 exhibitors, and one-to-one consultations to discuss tailor made project ideas.

They will be able to attend free seminars held by experts and masterclasses, sponsored by Internorm, on topics including sustainable heating; financial and planning permission issues; eco living and architectural design.

Charlie Luxton, sustainable architectural designer and presenter of More4's 'Building the Dream', and Julia Kendell, interior design expert and co-presenter of ITV's '60 Minute Makeover', will also be returning.



Plenty of stands for the crowds to see



HOW TO ENTER

To be in with a chance of winning a pair of tickets simply answer the following question

Who is the show sponsor?

Send your answer, with address and phone contact, on a postcard to Homebuilding Competition, Chronicle editorial, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES. Closing date: Thursday, March 12. Usual rules apply. Editor's decision is final

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Sunday 11-5pm

Birmingham Dogs' Home has a long and notable history in the care and protection of rescuing strays from the city streets of Birmingham and surrounding towns and villages in the West Midlands.

It was founded in 1892 on land that was made available by the late Sir Alfred Gooch Bart in New Canal Street, Birmingham, and proudly displayed the heading 'Birmingham Home for Lost and Starving Dogs' above its doors, a sign that is still present on the building, having been restored by its current owners.

Almost 100 years later - in 1987 - the Duchess of York officially opened the New Bartholomew Street home, which had been purpose-built to provide shelter and protection for over 150 abandoned dogs in comfortable kennel blocks with adjacent facilities, such as its own vets' clinic, puppy unit and isolation block.

The home is a charity which can only survive through the generosity and support of the general public and

benefactors from the local community. Without this we would be unable to carry on the vital work of rescuing and rehoming abandoned dogs.

Rescued

We at Birmingham Dogs' Home are here primarily to ensure that the abandoned dogs coming into our care are rescued from their plight, reunited with owners who may have lost them or rehomed to families that will respect and nurture them.

Our **rehoming procedure** is designed and operated principally to be both practical and fair. It takes into consideration the high number of dogs brought into our homes on a daily and weekly basis as well as our desire to find the best possible home for each individual dog in our care.

The public are free to walk around our homes to view our dogs at any time during our opening hours of Monday to Saturday 11am - 4.45pm, but they should be aware that not all dogs are available for rehoming. Some are stray dogs due to be claimed by their owners while others are under assessment by our staff for either medical or behavioural concerns.

Once you have spent time with one of our dogs and are satisfied that you would like to offer the dog a home, our rehoming staff will take you through the various stages required to complete the process. No pressure is placed on anyone to offer a dog a home. We do stress, however, to anyone considering this option that they must take as much time necessary before deciding to reserve a dog in our care.

Abandoned

Your help brings hope and happy tomorrows for abandoned dogs

Fundraising is the life's blood of Birmingham Dogs' Home. Without it we simply could not exist.

With no Government funding, we survive purely through the generous contributions of the general public, interested companies, groups, organisations and kind-hearted individuals who may or may not have purchased dogs from us and have remembered us in their Wills.

Legacies and other contributions are valued beyond compare and allow us to carry on providing care and protection for unwanted dogs.

This ensures that we can continue to rescue these unfortunate animals, oversee their welfare and good health and treat any conditions with first class veterinary attention all with one aim in mind ... to see them happily rehomed to loving new families.

Our highly trained kennel team do the rest with loving pastoral care prior to their four-legged charges leaving for pastures new.

There are various fundraising routes available for those who wish to donate. Whichever, we at Birmingham Dogs' Home are deeply indebted to those of you who work so tirelessly to help us help them ...

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Family want lessons to be learned from driver's death

Widow gives funeral collection to hospital



Kay Taylor with Dr Philip Brammer and nurse Nicola Smith who helped with her husband's care in Dudley

THE grateful widow of a motor neurone patient has donated £1,200 to a hospital as a thank you for his care.

Kay Taylor's husband Roy died on December 29 and she decided to donate money raised at his funeral to Russells Hall Hospital to show her gratitude for the support he had received.

The self-employed builder, who lived with his wife on Bridgnorth Road, Himley, was admitted with pneumonia in 2009 and his health deteriorated steadily from then on, but Mrs Taylor said the hospital staff helped to keep him alive for longer than expected.

She has donated the £1,200 given by the 150 wellwishers at his funeral service to the hospital's lung function unit and was particularly thankful to Dr Philip Brammer, a specialist in respiratory medicine.

"Russells Hall for all the years we had been going there had been absolutely wonderful and I thank Dr Brammer for keeping Roy alive for so long," said Mrs Taylor.

Sign up to stride out on bigger Borough Trail

WALKERS from across the country will put their best foot forward when the annual Dudley Borough Trail takes place in May.

The event, which attracts over 2,000 people, will take place on May 3 and is set to be bigger than before.

Walks of six, nine, 12, 18 and 26 miles on offer with routes covering the hidden beauty and proud industrial heritage of the borough.

People can walk at their own pace. All walks start at Dudley Leisure Centre, in Wellington Road, at designated times between 8am and noon.

The event is part of the 'Let's Get walking festival', which runs from April 18

to May 3. Councillor Hilary Bills, cabinet member for environment and culture on Dudley Council, said: "The borough trail is incredibly popular and offers walks for people of all ages and abilities. This year we're asking more people than ever before to get involved."

It costs £3 per person to join the 26 and 18 mile routes, £2.50 for the 12 and nine mile routes and £1.50 for the more gentle six miles route. An additional fee of 50p will be charged on the day. Entry forms are available online at www.dudley.gov.uk/dudleytrail from Dudley Council's leisure centres and libraries, or by calling (01384) 817817.

FAULTY machinery and poor lighting were among the criticisms made by a jury at the inquest into a delivery driver who was crushed to death.

Gary Pickering, aged 34, of Swinton, Manchester, died when his head became trapped between the back of his lorry and its tail-lift while he was unloading goods at Home Bargains in Dudley's Churchill precinct in September 2013. The jury returned a narrative conclusion.

Mr Pickering's family said they hoped lessons had been learned following the week-long inquiry at Smethwick Council House.

It is believed that father-of-one Mr Pickering may have mistakenly pressed the up button while trying to manoeuvre the lift, making it jolt back. The Health and Safety Execu-

By Rob Cox

tive's Dr Dominic Swan told the jury that the tail-lift was in a poor state of repair and that Mr Pickering should never have been able to put his head between it and the lorry.

Examination of the machinery, which had been installed a few months earlier, revealed a vital anti-lock bolt was missing.

Mark Balyz, representing Mr Pickering's employer TJ Morris, said it was his position while operating the machinery - leaning down rather than standing to the side of the lorry - which was important.

Concerns were also raised about the loading platform and lighting in the delivery area. TJ Morris driver Steven Owen said: "On occasions it has

been pitch dark. If you are there late at night the lights are off."

Company bosses said they were never told by the tail-lift's manufacturer that there was a risk.

The jury also heard the health and safety manager at TJ Morris did not inspect new tail-lifts when they were installed.

The narrative conclusion said: "There was inadequate lighting in the loading bay and the basement area at the time of the incident. Insufficient training had been provided specifically on the tail-lift. The tail-lift was defective. The pertinent risk assessments were inadequate."

Joe Morris, operations director at TJ Morris, said: "The inquest's findings will be carefully examined to ensure that current policies and regulations comply to the highest standards."

Labour's digital boss calls for more training

THE Black Country must use the digital age to cement its place in the manufacturing world, a Labour shadow minister has said.

Chi Onwurah, the shadow cabinet office minister who oversees the party's digital policy, said the West Midlands needed to be making and exporting more.

But she said Black Country businesses had to see digital technology as a chance to train their workers in new skills, rather than to cut jobs.

The minister was at Mason Metals in Brierley Hill with the party's candidate for Dudley South, Natasha Millward.

Ms Onwurah said: "We have to be making and exporting more and we need

to have an active industrial strategy which supports manufacturing and exports because we're still in a trade deficit."

"There is a great appetite for access to digital skills. Large companies are investing in these skills but small and medium enterprises lose out because they don't have the time or the finance."

"If local authorities are offering the right kind of business support in a global digital market that opens up exports in a new way."

"If we can get this right it is a huge win-win, using digital technology to improve skills. If it is being used just to drive out jobs then that means companies will head for disaster."

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Zombie event to raise cancer research cash

WHEN 30-year-old Carriss Evans was diagnosed with a stage-three brain tumour last year, her life was turned upside down.

Suffering from hallucinations and deja vu, Miss Evans, from Old Park Road, Dudley thought she was developing epilepsy before doctors confirmed the diagnosis in April last year. Now, having had the growth removed and undergone rigorous and difficult treatments of regular radiotherapy and chemotherapy, Miss Evans' cancer, a stage three oligoastrocytoma, is now in remission, and the former children's psychiatric nurse has made it her mission to raise awareness of the disease, which is the number one cancer killer in children and adults under-40.

"You can't believe it is happening to you but it is," Miss Evans said. "The symptoms I had were olfactory hallucinations and deja vu. I was smelling things and asking other people if they could smell them too, but nobody could."

Explain

"I could barely explain what was happening to me, I thought I was developing epilepsy. I don't know how a five-year-old child is supposed to be able to tell people if they experience it. "I went to the doctors finally and told them what I was experiencing. They sent me for an MRI where they spotted the tumour. It was a grade three tumour on my temporal lobe. "Nobody ever expects it to happen to them, nobody ever thinks they have a brain tumour." Miss Evans said her family were hugely supportive during her treatment, especially in the days leading



Front, Carriss Evans at the 'Rock Zombie' bar in King Street, Dudley, with licensees Amanda and Ken Jinks

up to her tumour being removed in June, and during the painful sessions of chemotherapy to destroy any traces of the cancer. After the tumour was removed, Miss Evans went through an intensive six week course of radiotherapy, with a break of a few weeks before beginning chemotherapy, which she is still undergoing.

Miss Evans said brain tumour research receives only one per cent of government health spending. Now at the Rock Zombie pub on King Street, Dudley, Miss Evans will host a special event to raise awareness and funds for brain tumour research. The event will feature live entertainment from 2.30-11pm on March 21.

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Officers drew Tasers on children 46 times

TASERS were drawn against children by West Midlands Police officers on 46 occasions last year, new figures show. The youngest was a 14-year-old boy who was armed with a hammer.

Of those 46, the electric stun weapons were fired only eight times in total at 17-year-olds and under. The West Midlands figure was down from 52 in 2013.

In the vast majority of cases – around 75 per cent – Tasers are drawn from their holster as a deterrent and not actually fired.

That was the case on three occasions in the West Midlands last year when officers came up against 13-year-olds reportedly acting violently.

Knife

They included a 999 call-out in Wolverhampton where a boy was threatening to stab people with a knife.

Officers produced Tasers against another 13-year-old in Sandwell after he had thrown a knife at his grandmother and attacked her with a metal crutch.

Police said that it was important to understand the figures in context.

Chief Superintendent Stuart Johnson, head of operations, said: "Tasers are not drawn lightly by of-

ficers. They are used where there is a risk of violence and provide an additional option to resolve situations that can arise from all sections of the public, including under-18s.

"Our officers have undergone detailed training, including scenario-based events to test judgement, accuracy and the procedural and legislative side of the equipment's use.

"The training has been developed by an experienced group of Taser instructors and practitioners and is subject to regular updates and review.

"In many cases, Taser has helped resolve incidents without injury. Simply drawing or aiming the Taser is often enough of a deterrent.

"Taser use is recorded every time it's removed from its holster but our figures show that in three-quarters of cases they're not actually fired.

"All Taser deployments are subject of a thorough debrief by a supervising officer to ensure it was appropriate."

For adults and children, the use of Tasers by the force was higher than anywhere in the country for the first six months of 2014. They were fired by regional officers on 120 occasions.

Metropolitan Police fired the guns 114 times, while Greater Manchester Police was the third highest force with officers firing 90 times. Officers from West Mercia fired them on 16 occasions.

Lighting up time at station's giant atrium



Let there be light — a view of the completed Atrium Roof which will dominate New Street station

NATURAL light has flooded the giant atrium at Birmingham New Street for the first time as demolition work comes to an end.

The stunning glass feature, which covers the size of a football pitch, will greet visitors to the station when its multi-million pound transformation is completed later this year along with the Grand Central shopping complex.

More than 6,000 tons of concrete has been removed from under the new atrium allowing light to shine on to the new concourse for the first time.

New structures will be hung from the atrium steelwork so work can begin to attach the streamline cladding to the interior, ready for the new-look station's relaunch in September.

Network Rail's project director for Birmingham New Street, Chris Montgomery, said: "The completion of this work marks a huge milestone for the project. Building the atrium roof and removing such a large amount of concrete from the centre of the building was a huge feat of engineering."

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Borough's council tax is frozen again

COUNCIL tax in Sandwell has been frozen for the fifth year running – despite what councillors called ‘unprecedented attacks’ on public services.

Deputy leader of the borough’s Labour-run council, Steve Eling, said at a budget meeting on Tuesday that Government would not be allowed to ‘penalise the people of Sandwell’.

Councillors also rejected a proposed 2.2 per cent pay rise, saying it would be inappropriate given the level of austerity being ‘forced’ on people.

The authority has to make cuts of £63 million by 2017.

Funding from central Government has dropped by £122m in the six years to 2015/16.

Recorded crime down in Sandwell

NEARLY 150 fewer crimes were recorded for Sandwell in December – compared with the year before – a fall of nine per cent, new figures have revealed.

Latest information from the Safer Sandwell Partnership shows there were 1,434 recorded crimes over the month. That’s 141 less than at the same time in 2013.

Officials said the number just fell short of the lowest recorded month for crime since 2006. That was in February 2013 when 1,428 offences were recorded.

Officials said they believe a fall in burglaries was due to patrols targeting burglary hotspots around the borough. SmartWater property marking has also been cited in the reduction.

Second Life on the way to be writer’s second big hit

By Adam Burling

HIS debut was always going to be a hard act to follow but author Steve Watson shouldn’t have worried, his second novel is flying off the shelves.

The author, from Stourbridge, admitted he was nervous before *Second Life* was released and knew it would inevitably be compared to his blockbuster thriller *Before I Go To Sleep*, which was made into a movie starring Nicole Kidman, Colin Firth and Mark Strong.

But the new thriller is now high in the Sunday Times best-seller list and shot into the top 10 lists at Waterstones and on Amazon.

Steve, who writes under the name SJ Watson, says Hollywood producers are already looking to turn it into a film.

Before I Go To Sleep was a slow-burning hit in 2011, with word spreading once it was featured on Richard and Judy’s Book Club on their old Channel Four teatime show.

Not only did the book – about a woman with amnesia who wakes up each morning unable to remember the day before – become a runaway hit, selling more than four million copies in more than 40 languages, it won the Crime Writers’ Association award for best debut novel. Last year made it to the big screen.

Second Life, which is another tense psychological thriller, has a long way to go yet but early sales figures for the hardback are very promising.

Specialist

The first novel was written while Steve was working as an audiology specialist in London but this time he was working in the knowledge that readers across the globe were waiting to see what he would produce next.

He again writes in the first person as a female character in *Second Life*. The protagonist Julia is a photographer and recovering alcoholic, who lives with her surgeon husband and their adopted son, who is her sister’s child.

When her sister is murdered outside her flat in Paris, Julia sets out to find the killer, discovering that her sibling was using dating sites to meet men for sex. She throws herself into her sister’s world to try and draw out the murderer but ends up coaxed into some sexual experimentation of her own.

“She thinks she’s over her addiction, and doesn’t realise that it’s just turned into a sex and love addiction,” he said.



Steve Watson, of Stourbridge, has a second hit novel

He admits it was a mid-life crisis which prompted him to have a go at penning a novel. He was 37, his boss was retiring and he knew he was going to be offered his job. But he didn’t want to go in that direction.

“I was nearly 40. When you’re young, there’s plenty of time. Then you get to an age where there isn’t. And I always thought that one day I would have a proper go as a writer. When I had my mid-life crisis, I didn’t go and sleep with somebody or crash a motorbike or buy a Ferrari, I just went on a writing course.”

He was accepted on the inaugural ‘Writing A Novel’ course at the Faber Academy in 2009 and, on the last day, was then taken on by a literary agent.

The idea of *Before I Go To Sleep* came from reading about amnesia, discovering that it could be caused by physical or emotional trauma.

He decided to write under the initials SJ because it’s



The cover of SJ Watson’s new thriller, out in hardback

a woman’s story and his editors didn’t want readers to know it was written by a man.

“Before it was even published there was a buzz about it. It felt like it could be big,” he recalls.

His life has changed in recent years but even if *Second Life* is another bestseller, he is keeping grounded.

Since his debut, he and his partner Nick have moved to a nicer flat in London but he still hasn’t bought a Ferrari. He can afford to take more taxis though, he says.

“It was a whirlwind time, but I think I have my feet firmly on the ground, my friends and family see to that.

“If I ever showed any sign of developing a big head, they would be the first to say, ‘Oi mate, don’t forget where you’re from.’”

Now he’s made the big time in publishing, he’s signed up for two more books and already has the idea for the next one but is remaining tight-lipped.

‘Revenge’ on his ex puts man in prison

A MAN who sold his ex-girlfriend’s cooker, fridge, washing machine and bed in ‘revenge’ after their relationship ended has been jailed for six months.

Adam George still had a key to the property in Quinton and after getting rid of the goods also cut up her clothing, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

Mr David Bennett, prosecuting, said that George had moved into the Blandford Road flat but his relationship with Kerry Owen had ended when he was arrested for tearing one of the doors in the property off its hinges.

George, who had a criminal record with 15 previous offences, returned to the flat after Miss Owen left for a few days and sold her furniture.

The 27-year-old, of no fixed address, admitted theft and criminal damage.

Mr Timothy Harrington, defending, said the offences had been motivated by revenge over the decision by his former girlfriend to stop seeing him.

He added that the defendant was full of remorse for his actions.

Recorder Michael Hurst told him the offences were so serious only an immediate prison sentence was appropriate.

George was also handed a restraining order which forbids him from having any contact with Miss Owen until further notice.

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Joan's goodbye to major tours

FOCUS ON FOLK

By Danny Farragher

CHART topping Brummie, Joan Armatrading is coming home as part of her last major tour when she will be playing Town Hall, Birmingham on Wednesday March, 25.

The good news is she is not retiring but the bad news, for those who haven't got their tickets, is the show is sold out, although it may be worth contacting the venue to see if there are any returns or cancellations.

Gretchen Peters will be on stage there on Saturday March 21, starting 8pm. Tickets are £21.50 and £26.50 plus the usual transaction fee which is £3 and charged on all bookings except when bought in person at the Town Hall or Symphony Hall Box office.

The Victoria Square venue then welcomes Irish songstress **Cara Dillon** who will be bringing her delicate and silken tones to the hall on Friday March, 27 at 7.30pm. Tickets are £21 plus the usual transaction fee.

Creatures

Singer/songwriter **Gren Bartley** is releasing his latest album this month called *Magnificent Creatures* and you can see him perform at The Woodman Folk Club which meets at Ashwood Marina, Kingswinford tomorrow, March 6. Members pay £6 and non members £1 more. Doors open at 8pm and the show starts around 8.30pm.

The following week on March 13 the club welcomes banjo virtuoso, if there is such a thing, **Dan Walsh**. Entry is £6 for members and £1 more for



Joan Armatrading who is giving up major tours after many years on the road

non-members. Walsh also has a new album out on March 16, called *Incidents and Accidents*.

Traditional musician and musical arranger **Nick Dow** is also coming to the canal side venue on March 27, tickets are £5 for members and again £1 more for non members.

A folk singer who's star is definitely on the rise and seems to be almost everywhere is **Kelly Oliver**, who will be sharing the bill at the Common Folk Club with **Nigel Bullock** on March 19 from 8.30pm. The club meets at the Pelsall Cricket & Sports Club in Walsall.

Heading back to the Second City, Red Lion Folk Club, King's Heath welcomes one of the busiest and in-demand female folk artists, **Nancy Kerr**, on March 11.

Kerr is nominated for best folk singer and best album at this year's BBC Radio2 Folk Awards.

She will also be touring later on in the year with Martin Simpson and Andy Cutting on the back of a new album they have put together called *Murmurs*. Tickets are £13 and can

vary depending upon whether you are a member and if you buy online. Doors open 7.15pm for a 7.45pm start.

You may remember her as the distinctive voice of Fairground Attraction but **Eddi Reader** has been carving out a solo career on the folk/acoustic circuit for many years and she is performing on March 28 at Biddulph Up in Arms, Staffs. Tickets are £22.50 and doors open at 6pm, the show starts at 8pm. Irish band, **The Fureys** will be at the New Alex Theatre on March 12. Tickets are £23.90 plus a £2.85 booking fee and the show starts 7.30pm.

More veterans of the folk circuit **Oysterband** will be at the Robin2 Bilston on Tuesday March 24. Tickets are £16 in advance or £18 on the night.

Seth Lakeman is bringing his solo show to the Slade Rooms, Broad Street, Wolverhampton on March 22. Tickets are £16.50 including booking fee and the doors open 7pm.

Scottish guitarist, **Ewan McLennan** will be playing Stourbridge Folk Club at Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge on March 19. Tickets are £8 in advance and £10 on the night.

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More roadworks in the city centre

CITY council bosses have pledged minimum disruption with work to start on the busiest junctions of Birmingham's ring road.

The £14 million project – part-funded by Government – focuses on improving the flow of traffic.

The preliminary stage will involve the removal of some trees and vegetation to enable road construction work to start in April or May.

Contractors will shortly be starting work on improving road layouts at Bordesley Circus, Haden Circus and Curzon Circle. Further projects to deliver improvements to Holloway Circus and Ashted Circus are in the pipeline with completion of the entire programme scheduled for Spring 2017.

Engineers find hole in the canal

ENGINEERS who drained a section of canal in Birmingham city centre to find the cause of a leak have discovered a large hole in the canal bed.

Hundreds of fish were carried to safety as water was removed from the canal by Gas Street Basin, near the Mailbox.

Water was discovered escaping from the bottom of an aqueduct into a disused railway tunnel below the stretch of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal.

Investigations into what caused the hole will continue.

Lawrence Tall, from the Canal & River Trust, said: "We've drained the canal and stopped the leak and are now investigating how best to repair the leak."

Region's Air Ambulance is now flying after dark

THE Midlands Air Ambulance will fly for 14 hours a day all year around after a flood of donations.

The charity hit a milestone as it expands its operations into the hours of darkness for the first time.

The Stourbridge-based charity has been at the heart of Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) operations across the Midlands for more than 23 years. The area of six million people is the biggest covered by an air ambulance service.

But, until September last year, it could only operate during 14 hours of daylight during the summer months and just 10 hours during the winter.

Despite the restrictions, the three aircraft run by the service and funded by public donations have carried out up to eight missions a day.

But research showed there was demand for an extended service and, backed by generous donations from the public and business, the charity is now able to operate 14 hours a day throughout the year, transporting patients between lit helipads to the area's trauma hospitals in the hours of darkness.

Latest figures show that in the first four months of after-dark flights, the charity completed 38 patient transfers where the aircraft had been on a mission after official sunset. A third of the flights were undertaken by the helicopter based at RAF Cosford, which covers the

By Simon Penfold

West Midlands and Shropshire.

Air operations manager Becky Tinsley said this milestone was another step towards providing a service throughout the night.

She said: "As well as providing crucial HEMS support throughout the day, being able to fly between lit hospital helipads within our extended operating hours throughout the year is significant for the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity."

"This has only been possible due to the tremendous support we receive from the public, and the hospitals that have provided lit helipad landing sites, but there is still a long way to go in improving the lit helipad network across the region."

"We have invested a portion of the public's donations to make this possible and we are delighted to have seen such a benefit so quickly."

The extended hours mean the service can carry out another 100 missions a year.

Chapels restoration to get under way



Restoration project gets £1m grant — The Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapels, in Cemetery Road, Lye

A LONG-awaited project to restore the landmark Grade II listed Lye and Wollescote Chapels will begin next month.

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust has secured a £1 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to carry out the work.

The building in Cemetery Road, Lye, which houses identical Anglican and non-conformist chapels, will be

converted into a venue for civil ceremonies.

Project organiser David Trevis-Smith said: "Following completion of the tendering process, approval has been obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the building contract has been let with the contractors, Croft Building & Conservation, due to start on site before the end of March."

He added: "If all goes to plan works

should be completed before Christmas."

When work is completed, the venue will be leased to Dudley Council.

Ceremony

It will have a waiting lobby and two reception areas as well as a wedding ceremony room and an office for staff.

The building, dating back to 1878, has been closed for the past 20 years.

Children's services hopeful after visit

INSPECTORS have concluded a month-long review of under-fire children's services in Sandwell, leaving councillors hoping they will no longer be classed 'inadequate'.

Sandwell Council was hit with the rating by education watchdog Ofsted in 2013 after it was said to lack a stable management team and rely too heavily on agency staff.

It recently said it had cut agency staff use to less than 10 per cent as it prepared for Ofsted's four-week visit.

The Ofsted visit came weeks after a review by the Local Government Association which still found areas in need of improvement.

Councillor Darren Cooper, Leader of Sandwell Council, said: "Ofsted finished their inspection last week and we are now waiting for their report."

"We are not able to comment until they publish it. We will get the opportunity to see a draft report before it is made public."

Ofsted began its latest inspection of Sandwell's safeguarding and social care services for children and young people on January 28.

The council believes it has 'radically' overhauled the way it works with children and families and that its systems are better.

The authority is hoping to have at least moved from 'inadequate' to 'requires improvement' when the report is published.

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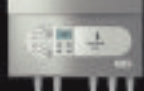
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Spend two whole days in the city that never sleeps, New York, to explore at leisure or perhaps join an optional city tour or helicopter flight.

Fly west to San Francisco for a two-night stay. An optional guided tour here shows the major landmarks, before crossing the Golden Gate Bridge to spend some time in Sausalito, taking the Bay Ferry back to the city.

Travel into the Sierra Nevada and through the breathtaking Yosemite National Park for an overnight stay in Visalia. The tour continues to Las Vegas for a two night stay and a day to explore at leisure or join optional trips to the Hoover Dam and a Vegas Nights helicopter flight.

Perhaps one of the highlights of this tour will be the included visit to the south rim of the Grand Canyon, the most scenic point to view this fantastic sight, or for aerial views join an optional helicopter flight.

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- Visit to Windsor
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Four days departing Jun 26, Sept 18

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Four days departing May 21

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*Please note the "from" price and price bands vary for each show
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Two days departing June 28

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- Return coach travel
- Overnight half-board accommodation
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Two days departing May 17 and Sept 20

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*Certain entrance fees payable locally
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PRICE FROM £719

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- Services of a tour manager
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Organised by Newmarket Promotions (ABTA V7812, ATOL 2325)



Puttin' on the Ritz in Top Hat

GET out your Top Hat, White Tie and Tails and Let's Face The Music and Dance when a top West End musical comes to Birmingham Hippodrome next week.

Based on the 1935 Irving Berlin musical movie starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, the new stage version of Top Hat won multiple Laurence Olivier Awards in 2013.

This feel-good show features lots of spectacular dance and such famous songs as Cheek To Cheek and Puttin' On The Ritz.

Starring Alan Burkitt and Charlotte Gooch in the Fred and Ginger roles, both from the London production, Top Hat will be staged at the Hippodrome from Tuesday, March 10, to Saturday, March 21.

Jeeves & Wooster come to the Rep

PEEP Show star Robert Webb plays Bertie Wooster with Jason Thorpe, from Primeval, as his long-suffering butler Jeeves when the much-loved comic characters are brought to Birmingham Rep.

Edwardian manners are sent up in this play by the Goodale Brothers, based on the work of PG Wodehouse. Jeeves and Wooster in Perfect Nonsense, from Monday to Saturday, March 14, also features Christopher Ryan, who was Mike in The Young Ones. It has been directed by Sean Foley, who directed The Ladykillers and Mad World My Masters staged at the Grand last week.

Fins are looking up for BRIT young things Jump The Shark

Group's Blonde ambition

IT'S the hit comedy that made the transition from screen to stage musical as Wolverhampton Musical Comedy Company prepare their groundbreaking production of Legally Blonde.

They will bring their amateur premier of the hit Broadway and West End show to the Grand Theatre on Tuesday after months of rehearsals.

Katie Astbury, aged 19, will be playing the lead role of Elle Woods, accompanied by loveable Chihuahua Bruiser, real name Fiona. Katie, from Finchfield, is stepping into the high heels of London star Sheridan Smith to play the unconventional trainee lawyer.

The run, over five nights and a Saturday matinee, will mark the first time Legally Blonde the musical has been performed by an amateur company in England. For more details, visit grandtheatre.co.uk or call 01902 429212.



Legally Blonde star Katie Astbury with Chihuahua Fiona

SITTING in the audience at the BRIT Awards last week were a Wolverhampton band who are already on their way to following in the footsteps of the UK music scene's biggest stars.

Teenagers Jump The Shark are on the right track after winning a BRIT-backed national award. The group is tipped for stardom after they lifted the coveted Next BRIT Thing talent award in front of a thousand-plus crowd at Indigo in the O2 Arena in London.

The award is backed by the UK music industry, the BRIT Awards and The Classic BRIT Awards. More than 900 solo artists and groups, aged 18 and 24, entered the competition

by uploading their music onto the Big Music Project website in May last year. Over 150 acts made it to regional heats before being whittled down to just 16 for the final showdown.

Lead singer and drummer Tasha Jones, a 17-year-old Wolverhampton Girls High School pupil from Wednesfield, confessed: "I am in shock. It was overwhelming."

"I cannot believe the number of important figures from the music industry that this win has put us in touch with. You cannot put a value on that."

Confidence

"It is a huge boost to our confidence. It proves that people really do like what we are doing and will motivate us to get even better."

Thomas Telford School pupil Theo Williams, also 17, from Tettenhall, plays guitar and sings backing vocals in the band that formed five years ago. He said: "We rose to the occasion and enjoyed the experience. The band initially got together after we discovered that we were better guitarists than footballers. We met by accident but have stuck together. It has been around a year since we decided to go with a four piece format and it has been great."

Jump The Shark's triumph gives them the opportunity to record at the legendary Abbey Road studios, where The Beatles and Pink Floyd made some of their most famous albums. They could also possibly have one



Next BRIT thing — Jump The Shark

of their songs featuring on next year's BRIT Awards album.

Theo admitted: "The prospect of being in the studio where John Lennon and numerous other wonderful musicians sat is very exciting."

The band write their own music and performed their own song There's Always One. The other members are guitarist Jon Murphy, 17, from Claregate who attends Walsall College and bass guitarist Matt Gregory, 16, from Tettenhall, a pupil at Thomas Telford School.

Jump The Shark will be performing on March 19 at Newhampton Arts Centre in Wolverhampton.

Award winners on way to Midlands

BRIT Awards winners are on their way to Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

First up are heavy rock duo Royal Blood who have won lots of fans since their self-titled debut album was released in August.

The powerhouse pair from Brighton won best British Group award and will have a full house for their concert at Wolverhampton Civic Hall on Wednesday. Their support will be Mini Mansions, featuring Queens of the Stone Age bassist Michael Shuman on drums.

British Female Solo Artist winner Paloma Faith will be in concert at Birmingham Barclaycard Arena on March 19 and has already sold out her Forest gig on July 10 at Cannock Chase.

Global Success Award winner Sam Smith has sold out his March 22 date at Wolverhampton Civic. His debut album In the Lonely Hour has sold in millions.

Surreal revamp for popular opera

WELSH National Opera return to Birmingham to perform a non-traditional production of Mozart's The Magic Flute at the Hippodrome. Staged tonight (Thursday) and tomorrow, Dominic Cooke's production has been described as warm, witty and surreal.

Watch out there's a witch about when Humperdinck's Hansel and Gretel becomes a dark fantasy in Richard Jones's production at Birmingham on Saturday.

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CHOICE



Elisabeth Shue

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Channel 5, 9pm)

Daycia Fox was attending rehab in Las Vegas to treat her addiction to alcohol and drugs. Sadly she met an untimely end. However, when her body is found in the swimming pool of an abandoned house, there's more to the case than meets the eye; this is CSI after all, where nothing is ever as it seems. Following a post-mortem, detectives discover no trace of chlorine in the water in the victim's lungs, so it seems she died in the bath back at the clinic, and somebody moved her body to make it look like an accident. It begs the questions: who did it and why? Look out for Greg (Heroes) Grunberg among the regular cast, which includes his Hollow Man co-star Elisabeth Shue, and the ever reliable Ted Danson.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Mary Berry Cooks. (R) **12.00** BBC News: Weather. **12.10** Football Focus. **1.00** Live Davis Cup Tennis. Great Britain v USA. **4.30** Final Score. **5.00** BBC News: Regional News: Weather. **5.20** Match of the Day Live. Aston Villa v West Bromwich Albion (Kick-off 5.30pm).

7.30 The Voice UK. As the battle rounds continue, the contestants aim to secure their place in the next stage of the competition. It's up to Will.i.am, Tom Jones, Rita Ora and Ricky Wilson to decide who they want to keep and eliminate, but it's not necessarily over for the losers, as the coaches have a chance to "steal" a rejected artist for their own team.

9.30 Casualty. Lily tries to persuade a woman to be honest with her husband by admitting she doesn't want to continue with IVF treatment – although when the doctor's own exhaustion begins to catch up with her, it seems she is not being entirely truthful to herself. Rita helps a man change his stubborn attitude after he refuses to tell people he has a neurological disease, while Dixie is forced to give in a verbal war.

10.15 The National Lottery Live. Gaby Roslin is joined by comedian and actor Matt Lucas, who pushes the buttons to reveal the Lotto and Thunderball numbers.

10.25 BBC News: Weather.

10.45 Match of the Day. Highlights of this weekend's only Premier League encounter, which saw Queens Park Rangers host Tottenham Hotspur at Loftus Road.

11.15 Match of the Day: FA Cup Highlights. Highlights of the first two sixth-round matches, as Bradford City faced Reading at Valley Parade and Aston Villa welcomed West Bromwich Albion to Villa Park; National Lottery Update.

11.55 The Football League Show. Manish Bhasin presents highlights and all the goals from the latest fixtures in the Championship, League One and League Two, including Derby County v Birmingham City.

1.15 Film: Charlie & Boots. (2009) **2.50** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.55** BBC News.

BBC2

7.30 FA Cup Rewind: Quarter Final Classics. **8.30** Live Athletics: European Indoor Championships. **11.30** Animal Park. (R) **12.00** A Taste of Britain. **12.30** James Martin's Food Map of Britain. (R) **12.40** Noel Coward: Talking Pictures. **1.10** Film: In Which We Serve. (1942) Second World War drama, starring Noel Coward. **3.00** The Great British Sewing Bee. (R) **4.00** Gardeners' World. (R) **4.30** Live Athletics: European Indoor Championships. The third day of the meeting from the O2 Arena in Prague, Czech Republic.

7.30 How We Got to Now with Steven Johnson. The American science author explores the impact on the modern world of technological innovations in the sphere of lighting, investigating Thomas Edison's role in the invention and development of the electric bulb. Steven also reveals how a French scientist accidentally discovered how to create neon light, leading to a revolution in advertising and the glare of the Las Vegas strip.

8.30 Dad's Army. Mainwaring and the platoon try to capture three German airmen who have landed in a lake after bailing out and intend to stay in their dinghy until nightfall. (R)

9.00 **OL.** Josh Widdicombe, Sue Perkins and Frank Skinner join regular panellist Alan Davies as host Stephen Fry asks a range of questions about levity, levitation and lights. (R)

9.30 Reginald O' Hunter's Songs of the South. The comedian concludes his road trip through the American South by exploring the musical heritage of Mississippi and Louisiana. In Memphis, he meets songwriting partners Steve Cropper and Eddie Floyd at Stax Records, before going on the trail of the origins of both delta and hill country blues in the company of musicians Seasick Steve and Cedric Burnside. Last in the series.

10.30 Film: Good Vibrations. (2012) Premiere. A record shop owner in 1970s Belfast becomes a key figure in the underground punk scene during the Troubles. Fact-based drama, starring Richard Dormer and Jodie Whittaker.

12.05 Film: Cross of Iron. (1977) Sam Peckinpah's Second World War drama, starring James Coburn, Maximilian Schell, James Mason and David Warner. **2.15** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 **CITV:** Bottom Knockers Street. **6.10** Bottom Knockers Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knockers Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan. (R) **6.45** Dino Dan. (R) **7.00** Animals. (R) **7.10** Sooty. (R) **7.25** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: Nerds & Monsters. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Adventure Time. **8.30** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. **8.50** Scrambled!: Hulk and the Agents of Smash. **9.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **10.20** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **11.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **12.25** ITV News: Weather. **12.35** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **1.35** Tipping Point. (R) **2.35** Doc Martin. (R) **3.35** Secrets from the Sky. (R) **4.05** Off Their Rockers. (R) **4.35** Big Star's Little Star. (R) **5.35** Regional Programme ; Weather. **5.45** ITV News: Weather.

6.00 You've Been Framed! Favourites. Harry Hill narrates a selection of comical clips, featuring Annette Bening and Kim Jong-il lookalikes, below-the-belt mishaps, mischief and painful-looking accidents. (R)

7.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. The Georgie duo take control of Jeremy Kyle in I'm a Celebrity Get Out of Me Earl, and Little Ant and Dec meet Take That. Rob Brydon is this week's celebrity guest announcer.

8.25 Take Me Out. Paddy McGuinness hosts an extended edition, giving the 30 single women one last chance to find the man of their dreams on the show. Hotel receptionist Leslie from Belfast, plumber Alan from Pontefract, construction worker Cole from Darlington and model Pete from Cornwall are all hoping to sweep them off their feet, and must persuade the girls to keep their lights on as a sign of approval. Paddy finds out how the couples get on in the sun, and also provides an update on last week's lovebirds. Last in the series.

9.55 The Jonathan Ross Show. The host welcomes actor Damian Lewis (Homeland, Wolf Hall), and music legend Bryan Ferry, who performs in the studio.

10.55 ITV News: Weather.

11.15 Film: Play Misty for Me. (1971) A DJ revives his relationship with an old flame, driving an obsessive fan mad with jealousy. Psychological thriller, directed by and starring Clint Eastwood.

1.10 Jackpot 247. **3.00** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) **3.15** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.00 How I Met Your Mother. **6.30** How I Met Your Mother. **6.55** Trans World Sport. **7.55** The Morning Line. **9.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **10.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **10.30** Frasier. (R) **11.00** Frasier. (R) **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.00** Rude(ish) Tube. **1.30** Channel 4 Racing. Live coverage from Sandown Park and Wolverhampton.

4.10 Come Dine with Me. (R) **4.45** Come Dine with Me. (R) **5.15** Come Dine with Me. (R) **5.50** Come Dine with Me. (R)

6.15 The Simpsons. A romantic evening at the ice-rink leads to Homer and Marge heading for the Winter Olympics to play for a curling team, while Lisa becomes hopelessly addicted to collecting sporting memorabilia and Bart befriends Canada's equivalent of Milhouse. (R)

6.40 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Crufts 2015. Clare Balding presents highlights from the third and penultimate day of the world's largest dog show, held at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. Yesterday saw the judging of the Working and Pastoral groups, and this evening's programme moves on to the Terrier and Hound categories. There's also a special report from Noel Fitzpatrick, known for his pioneering work as seen in Channel 4 series The Supertvet.

9.00 Film: Salt. (2010) A CIA agent is accused of being a sleeper assassin with a deadly purpose – to kill the Russian president during a diplomatic visit and start a third world war. She goes on the run, with her colleagues in hot pursuit – but each attempt to prove her innocence only raises more questions about her identity. Action thriller, starring Angelina Jolie and Chiwetel Ejiofor.

11.00 Film: Heartbreakers. (2001) A mother and daughter con rich bachelors out of a fortune, but their plans are threatened when the daughter falls in love. Comedy, with Sigourney Weaver.

1.20 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **2.10** Hollyoaks. (R) **4.15** Hugh's 3 Good Things: Best Bites. (R) **4.30** Double Your House for Half the Money. (R) **5.25** Location, Location, Location. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.00** SpongeBob SquarePants. **10.35** Chinese Food in Minutes. (R) **10.50** The Hotel Inspector. (R) **11.45** The Hotel Inspector. (R) **12.40** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **1.35** Cowboy Builders. (R) **2.35** Missing: Flight MH370 One Year On. (R) **3.35** Film: Monte Walsh. (1970) Western, starring Lee Marvin. **5.30** 5 News Weekend. **5.40** Film: Columbo: Candidate for Crime. (1973) Detective drama, starring Peter Falk.

7.20 NCIS. The murder of a marine during a cruise is investigated by the agents, who discover the victim had turned his back on a life of privilege to join the military. (R)

8.05 NCIS. A navy recruitment officer is murdered at a high school and the agents discover he had recently begun a relationship with a married teacher whose wife held a grudge against him. They also find out a student's father was vehemently opposed to his joining the military, and receive help from an unexpected quarter – Ducky's esteemed predecessor, Dr Magnus. (R)

9.00 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. A body found in the swimming pool of an abandoned house is identified as Daycia Fox, who was attending rehab in Las Vegas to treat her addiction to alcohol and drugs. The post-mortem reveals no trace of chlorine in the water in the victim's lungs and the team concludes she died in the bath back at the clinic, with somebody moving the body to make it look like a tragic accident.

10.00 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit. Saliva from a tiger is discovered on a murdered model, leading the detectives on the hunt for a former people trafficker who is now involved in the exotic animal trade. (R)

10.55 Law & Order. An investigation into a hit-and-run leads to a property scam, but the team's undercover work takes a surprising twist that pits McCoy against the US Attorney's office. Previously seen on 5USA.

11.50 True Crimes: The First 72 Hours. Winnipeg police are baffled by a bank robber who does not fit the usual profile of a thief. (R)

12.15 SuperCasino. **3.10** 10,000 BC. (R) **4.00** Benefits Britain: Life on the Dole. (R) **4.50** Make It Big. (R) **5.15** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.40** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three

7.00 Great TV Mistakes **8.00** Top Gear **9.00** Russell Howard's Good News **9.30** Film: Adventureland (2009) **11.10** Family Guy **1.00** Uncle **1.30** Russell Howard's Good News **2.00** South Side Story **2.30** Sexy Beasts **4.00** Close

BBC Four

7.00 The Secret Life of Elephants **8.00** Lost Kingdoms of Central America **9.00** Hostages **10.45** Pompeii: The Mystery of the People Frozen in Time **11.45** TOP2: 80s Special **12.45** Charlie Brooker's Weekly Wipe **1.15** Top of the Pops: 1980 **1.50** The Secret Life of Elephants **2.50** Lost Kingdoms of Central America

ITV2

11.10 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway **12.35** Catchphrase **1.20** Film: Batteries Not Included (1987) **3.25** You've Been Framed! **4.00** Film: The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement (2004) **6.15** Film: Mr Bean's Holiday (2007) **8.00** Film: Jurassic Park III (2001) **9.55** Take Me Out – The Gossip **10.55** Ibiza Weekender **11.55** The Keith Lemon Sketch Show **12.20** Reality Bites **1.05** Crazy Reaches **1.30** Hell's Kitchen **2.50** Film Reaction **2.50** Teleshopping **5.50** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3

11.40 The Darling Buds of May **12.50** A Touch of Frost **3.00** Film: Carry On Cowboy (1966) **5.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **7.00** Doc Martin **8.00** Foyle's War **10.05** Lewis **12.10** A Touch of Frost **2.10** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4

11.45 Live Darts: UK Open. Coverage of the second day at the Butlins Minehead Resort. **5.00** Storage Wars **6.00** Storage Wars: Texas **7.00** Live Darts: UK Open. **11.00** Cricket World Cup Highlights **12.00** Film: Buried (2010) **2.00** Hogan's Heroes **3.00** Teleshopping

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11.00 Made in Chelsea **12.00** Taking New York **1.00** Marry Me **1.30** New Girl **2.30** Melissa & Joey **3.30** Baby Daddy **4.30** How I Met Your Mother **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Film: Beverly Hills Cop II (1987) **11.05** The Big Bang Theory **11.30** Rude Tube **12.35** How I Met Your Mother **1.35** The Cleveland Show **3.10** One Tree Hill **3.50** Desperate Housewives

Film4

11.00 Treasure Island (1972) **1.00** Rio (2011) **3.00** The Hunt for Red October (1990) **5.55** Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen (2009) **9.00** Serenity (2005) **11.20** AVPR: Aliens vs Predator – Requiem (2007) **1.10** Predators (2010) **3.25** Close

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CHOICE



Aidan Turner

Poldark (BBC1, 9pm)
New series. Period drama based on the novels by Winston Graham, originally adapted into a successful 1970s TV series. In late 18th-century Cornwall, Ross Poldark joins the army to avoid charges of smuggling, leaving behind his loved one Elizabeth – and when he returns three years later, having fought in the American War of Independence, he finds his father dead, his estate in ruins and his sweetheart engaged to another man. Aidan Turner takes the title role, with Eleanor Tomlinson, Heida Reed, Warren Clarke, Mary Woodvine, Harriet Ballard, Robert Daws, Kyle Soller and Caroline Blakiston.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.45** Match of the Day. (R) **8.20** Match of the Day: FA Cup Highlights. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Sunday Politics. **12.15** BBC News. **12.25** Songs of Praise. **1.00** Live Davis Cup Tennis. Great Britain v USA. **3.35** Bargain Hunt. (R) **4.05** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.50** Pointless Celebrities. (R) **5.35** BBC News; Regional News; Weather. **6.00** **The Big Painting Challenge.** The amateur artists travel to Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, the birthplace and ancestral home of Winston Churchill. Their first challenge sees them arranging a collection of personal items – from a large yellow hat to a skull – which they must capture on canvas using acrylics. This is followed by a quick 30-minute sketch of a giant chess board, ensuring that light and shadow are just as important as perspective and scale. In their last chance to impress before the elimination, the hopefuls paint the facade of the palace, attempting to capture the drama of its stunning architecture. **7.00** **Countryfile.** The team is in rural Cheshire, where Matt Baker joins an agricultural student working on his father's farm and Ellie Harrison discovers what life was like for Victorian apprentices. **8.00** **Call the Midwife.** Trixie and Sister Mary Cynthia team up to support a deaf mother-to-be, while a case of morning sickness proves more serious than initially suspected. Last in the series. **9.00** **Poldark.** New series. Period drama about a young aristocrat who returns from the battlefield to find his estate in ruins and his sweetheart engaged to another man. Aidan Turner stars. **10.00** BBC News; Regional News; Weather. **10.30** **Match of the Day: FA Cup Highlights.** Highlights of the third match in the FA Cup sixth round, as Liverpool faced Blackburn Rovers at Anfield. **11.05** **The Apprentice USA.** In an extended edition featuring two tasks, the teams have to promote and sell tickets to a live comedy event, and then film a 60-second advertisement for a new car safety device. **1.10** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.15** BBC News.

BBC2

6.10 The Football League Show. (R) **7.30** Gardeners' World. (R) **8.00** Countryfile. (R) **9.00** FA Cup Rewind: Sixth-Round Classics. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.30** The Great Comic Relief Bake Off. (R) **12.30** A Taste of Britain. **1.00** A Taste of Britain. **1.30** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.30** Live Athletics: European Indoor Championships. The final day of the meeting from the O2 Arena in Prague, Czech Republic. **5.35** Super-Powered Owls: Natural World. (R) **6.35** **Pompidou.** The penniless aristocrat thinks he has won the lottery, but it turns out that it his butler Hove who has actually hit the jackpot. Comedy, starring Matt Lucas. **7.00** **The Fifteen Billion Pound Railway.** The concluding episode of the documentary about the construction of the Crossrail train line linking east and west London follows the work of engineers building 10 new stations. A team battles to put together the giant jigsaw that will become a cathedral-sized station at Canary Wharf. Last in the series. (R) **8.00** **Top Gear.** James May competes in a world rallycross race and Richard Hammond tests the new version of the Mazda MX-5. Plus, Nicholas Hoult is the Star in the Reasonably Priced Car. **9.00** **Let's Play Darts for Comic Relief.** Gabby Logan is joined on the sofa by the celebrity players, who reflect on the highs and lows of the tournament so far and discuss the eagerly anticipated final. Then the competition reaches its climax as the two remaining famous faces and their professional partners go head to head for the title at the Lakeside Country Club in Frimley Green, Surrey. Last in the series. **10.05** **The Revolution Will Be Televised.** First of two compilations from the first three series of the sketch show lampooning arrogance, hypocrisy and greed in public life, starring Heydon Prowse and Jolyon Rubinstein. **10.35** **Film: The Hunter.** (2011) Premiere. Drama, starring Willem Dafoe, Frances O'Connor and Sam Neill. **12.10** **Film: Howl.** (2010) **1.30** Sign Zone: Countryfile. (R) **2.25** Holby City. (R) **3.25** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knockers Street. **6.10** Bottom Knockers Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knockers Street. (R) **6.30** Dino Dan. (R) **6.45** Dino Dan. (R) **7.00** Animals. (R) **7.10** Sooty. (R) **7.25** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.30** Scrambled! Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled! Nerds & Monsters. (R) **7.50** Scrambled! Ultimate Spider-Man. **8.30** Scrambled! Horrid Henry. **8.50** Scrambled! Deadtime Stories. (R) **9.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **10.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **11.30** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **12.35** ITV News: Weather. **12.40** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **1.40** River Monsters. (R) **2.40** Catchphrase. (R) **3.25** **Film: The Living Daylights.** (1987) James Bond adventure, starring Timothy Dalton. **6.00** **Regional Programme:** Weather. **6.15** **ITV News:** Weather. **6.30** **The Chase: Celebrity Special.** Former England cricket captain Michael Vaughan, presenter Anna Richardson, buschcraft expert Ray Mears and Coronation Street actress Jane Danson play for charity. Last in the series. **7.30** **Off Their Rockers.** A foul-mouthed nun runs amok, Seb gets advice on attending a naturist wedding and Dave gives a member of the public his lucky pants. **8.00** **All Star Family Fortunes.** Former X Factor winner Sam Bailey and Loose Women panellist Jamelia team up with their families in an attempt to win a jackpot of £30,000 for charity. **9.00** **Mr Selfridge.** Nancy begins to feel the weight of her deception over her fling with Harry, Victor and Violetta take a romantic trip to the coast, and Mr Gorse finds out the truth from Miss Marple. **10.00** **ITV News:** Weather. **10.15** **Bear Grylls: Mission Survive.** Tensions reach boiling point as the celebrities face their toughest challenge yet, navigating down a powerful river, building shelters, catching food and enduring a tropical storm. (R) **11.15** **Premiership Rugby Union.** Highlights from the 17th round of fixtures, including Bath v Sale Sharks at the Recreation Ground, Exeter Chiefs v London Welsh at Sandy Park and Wasps v Saracens at Ricoh Arena. **12.05** **The Store.** **2.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) **3.10** **ITV News:** Weather. **5.05** **The Jeremy Kyle Show.** (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.20 How I Met Your Mother. **6.45** How I Met Your Mother. **7.10** How I Met Your Mother. **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Amazing Spaces Shed of the Year. (R) **1.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **2.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **2.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **2.55** **Film: Bride Wars.** (2009) Comedy, starring Kate Hudson and Anne Hathaway. **4.40** Location, Location. (R) **5.40** Channel 4 News. **6.05** **A Place in the Sun: Home or Away.** Jasmine Harman and Jonnie Irwin meet a man who wants to buy a place in the south-west of France, and his partner, who is nervous of taking the plunge and would prefer Devon. **7.00** **Crufts 2015: Best in Show.** The final day concludes with the most prestigious prize of the competition – the Best in Show – as Clare Balding goes behind the scenes during the build-up, meets the participants and reports live from the NEC in Birmingham as the winner is announced. Last in the series. **9.00** **Indian Summers.** There's much excitement in Simla as the Viceroy arrives for the first of his summer visits. Ralph is troubled when he discovers the only piece of evidence that linked Chandru Mohan to the Congress Party has gone missing. Aafin finds himself in danger when he learns there will be a search of the properties of all those who had access to the stolen item. Ian is forced to grow up quickly when he receives sad news about his uncle, while Eugene threatens to return to Chicago with Madeleine. Sarah receives information from England that sheds light on Alice's mysterious past. **10.08** **Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown.** Jimmy Carr hosts this comedy take on the quiz, with team captains Sean Lock and Jon Richardson joined by Jo Brand and Claudia Winkleman. Bill Bailey is in Dictionary Corner. (R) **11.05** **Film: The Twilight Saga: New Moon.** (2009) Romantic fantasy sequel, starring Kristen Stewart. **1.25** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **2.20** Come Dine with Me. (R) **4.40** River Cottage Veg Heroes. (R) **5.05** Location, Location. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **6.20** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.30** Pip Ahoy! (R) **6.45** The Mr Men Show. (R) **6.55** Chloe's Closet. (R) **7.05** Only the Little White Van. **7.10** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.25** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **7.35** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.50** Little Princess. (R) **8.00** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **8.10** Zack and Quack. **8.25** Toby's Travelling Circus. (R) **8.35** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.45** Jelly Jam. (R) **9.05** LazyTown. (R) **9.30** Dora and Friends. **10.00** SpongeBob SquarePants. **10.35** The Dog Rescuers. (R) **11.00** The Hotel Inspector. (R) **12.00** The Hotel Inspector. (R) **12.55** The Hotel Inspector. (R) **1.55** **Film: The Reef.** (2006) Premiere. Animated adventure, with the voice of Freddie Prince Jr. **3.25** **Film: Open Season 2.** (2008) Animated comedy sequel, with the voice of Joel McHale. **4.55** **Film: Mulan.** (1998) Disney animated adventure, with the voices of Ming-Na and Eddie Murphy. **6.35** **5 News Weekend.** **6.40** **Film: Hitch.** (2005) A professional relationship guru, who specialises in offering advice to lonely single men, helps an unlucky-in-love accountant to woo the girl of his dreams. However, when he finds himself falling for a beautiful gossip columnist, his usual charm abandons him and he discovers his expertise counts for nothing. Romantic comedy, with Will Smith. Edited for violence and language. **9.00** **Film: 21 Jump Street.** (2012) Cops Schmidt and Jenko hated each other when they were at school together, but have grown up to become friends. They are forced to relive the horrors of their adolescence when their captain decides their youthful appearance makes them the perfect undercover agents to crack a high-school drug ring. Comedy inspired by the 1980s TV series, with Jonah Hill and Channing Tatum. Edited for language. **11.15** **Film: Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story.** (2004) The struggling owner of a run-down gym tries to save his business by forming a team for the US dodgeball championships. Sporting comedy, starring Ben Stiller and Vince Vaughn. **1.05** SuperCasino. **3.10** The Gadget Show. (R) **4.00** House Doctor. (R) **4.25** Make It Big. (R) **5.15** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.40** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 The Voice UK **9.00** Russell Howard's Good News **10.00** I Survived a Zombie Apocalypse **11.00** Family Guy **11.45** American Dad! **12.05** Family Guy **12.30** I Survived a Zombie Apocalypse **1.30** Uncle **2.00** South Side Story **2.30** Sexy Beasts **BBC Four**
7.00 The Great War **7.40** New Forest Badgers **7.50** Dancing Cranes of Sweden **8.00** Royal Television Society Huw Wheldon Memorial Lecture: Public Service Broadcasting – A House of Cards? **8.45** Wild Scotland **9.00** A Wolf Called Storm: Natural World Special **10.00** Storyville: India's Daughter **11.00** Film: Bright Days Ahead (2013) **12.30** Boy George and Culture Club: Karma to Calamity **1.30** Nile Rodgers: The Hitmaker **2.30** The New Romantics – A Fine Romance **3.20** Sounds of the Eighties **3.50** Close **ITV2**
11.30 Take Me Out **1.00** Take Me Out – The Gossip **2.00** You've Been Framed! **2.30** Scorpion **3.25** Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway **4.50** **Film: The Smurfs** (2011) **6.55** **Film: Freaky Friday** (2003) **9.00** Ibiza Weekender **10.00** The Keith Lemon Sketch Show **10.30** **Film: American Pie Presents: The Naked Mile** (2006) **12.40** Morn **1.30** Crazy Beaches **1.55** Life's Funniest Moments **2.15** Teleshopping **5.55** **ITV4** Nightscreen **ITV3**
11.20 Rosemary & Thyme **12.20** A Touch of Frost **2.30** Jane Eyre **4.40** Agatha Christie's Marple **6.45** Inspector Morse **9.00** Sunday Night at the Palladium **10.00** Birds of a Feather **10.30** City Lights **11.05** **Film: Chaplin** (1992) **2.20** Perspectives: David Suchet – People I Have Shot **3.10** Judge Judy **3.30** **ITV3** Nightscreen **3.40** Emmerdale **ITV4**
12.45 Live Darts: UK Open. **5.00** Storage Wars **6.00** The Big Fish Off **7.00** Live Darts: UK Open. **11.00** Cricket World Cup Highlights **12.00** Brian Lara: Sports Life Stories **1.00** River Monsters: Untold Stories **2.00** Hell on Wheels **2.55** **ITV4** Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping **E4**
12.30 Revenge **1.30** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **2.30** The 100 **3.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.00** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** **Film: Iron Man** (2008) **9.00** Troy **10.00** Ride Tube **11.05** The Big Bang Theory **11.35** Tattoos After Dark **12.35** Taking New York **1.40** 2 Broke Girls **2.05** Rules of Engagement **2.50** One Tree Hill **3.30** Hollyoaks **Film4**
11.00 Brief Encounter (1945) **1.00** Step Up 3 (2010) **3.20** Jumper (2008) **5.05** Porridge (1979) **6.55** Playing for Keeps (2012) **9.00** The Adjustment Bureau (2011) **11.05** The Fourth Kind (2009) **1.05** Kelly & Victor (2012)

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MONDAY

The Fugitive, Channel 5, 11pm

A doctor is convicted of his wife's murder and forced to go on the run to prove his innocence – but his efforts to find the mysterious one-armed man he believes is the real killer are hampered by a tenacious US marshal. Thriller, starring Harrison Ford, an Oscar-winning Tommy Lee Jones, Sela Ward, Julianne Moore and Joe Pantoliano. (1993)

TUESDAY

Hollywoodland, BBC1, 11.40pm

Fact-based mystery focusing on the life and sudden death of actor George Reeves, famed for his role as Superman in the 1950s TV series. The story is told in flashback through the eyes of a private investigator hired by Reeves' mother to unearth the truth surrounding his mysterious fate. Starring Ben Affleck, Adrien Brody, Diane Lane and Bob Hoskins. (2006)

WEDNESDAY

Shifty, BBC1, 12.25am

London cocaine dealer Shifty finds his outlook transformed by the return of his best friend Chris after four years away. As the pair spend the day together, Shifty struggles to deal with a persistent addict and a rival with a score to settle, while at the same time confronting the bleak future he finds himself facing. Drama, starring Riz Ahmed, Daniel Mays and Jason Flemyng. (2008)



The Fugitive, Monday, Channel 5, 11pm

FRIDAY

Kick-Ass, Channel 4, 10pm

A teenage comic-book fan sets out to become a real-life superhero. His amateur crime-fighting exploits make him a media sensation, but he is soon in over his head as he encounters a sadistic gangster and a father-daughter vigilante team with a far more lethal approach to cleaning up the streets. Comic-book action comedy, with Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Chloe Grace Moretz and Nicolas Cage. (2010)

10,000 BC, ITV, 11.40pm

In prehistoric times, a young mammoth-hunter bravely combats ferocious creatures as he journeys across the wilderness to rescue his captive lover and her fellow villagers from brutal slave raiders. Roland Emmerich's fantasy adventure, starring Steven Strait, Camilla Belle, Cliff Curtis and Joel Virgel. (2008)

Term-time is over as drama bids farewell

That's all folks – Waterloo Road is closing its doors for good. Almost a grown-up version of the much-missed Grange Hill, this drama was originally commissioned for just a handful of episodes way back in 2006, and yet here we are, saying our fond farewells just short of 10 years down the line.

But those years haven't been without drama. We've seen teachers and pupils come and go, giving show bosses the chance to tackle a range of issues affecting young people today, and there's even been a relocation amidst all that, from Rochdale to Greenock.

Original cast members Jason Merrells, Angela Griffin and Jamie Glover are long gone, but Laurie Brett, who plays Christine Mulgrew, is now one of the current cast's longest-serving members.

It's been a particularly busy couple of months for her, what with the live EastEnders episodes celebrating the soap's 30th anniversary in addition to Waterloo coming to an end, but she can

quickly bring to mind some of her most memorable scenes from the series. "Two in particular stand out for me," she explains. "Episode 13 in series 8 when Christine's ex-husband turns up and the revelations of her really dark past come out, and episode 19 of series 9 when she quite spectacularly falls off the wagon and has a meltdown at the school. Both episodes were really challenging and all-consuming but I think it's been the best work I've ever done."

Asked why she thinks the show has done so well for all these years, she says: "It's one of the few shows that a whole family including grandparents, parents and kids can find appealing enough to sit down and watch together. And it gives them an intro to then talk about really topical issues and it's very rare to find a TV programme that allows that."

Brett adds: "I will really miss Christine, I have adored playing her. In five years' time, she'll be on a gorgeous beach with George Windsor, sipping non-alcoholic cocktails."

Well... it's probably safe to say the actress won't be left twiddling her thumbs and short of work.

As the series wraps up, the school pulls out all the stops in a desperate bid to halt the merger with Havelock High, and with no Vaughan, the students take matters into their own hands and try to uncover the council's real plans, after discovering it's been less than transparent before now. But with the council and its supporters out in force to convince the community and parents that the merger is the best outcome for everyone, who will win?

Meanwhile, Marco has suspicions about Lorna's ex-husband. However, his meddling only serves to land him and Kenzie in a dangerous situation.

Speaking of Kenzie, she has a decision to make – who will finally win her heart, Scott or Justin?

Neil Pearson, Stefano Braschi, Lorna Aikman and Charlotte Beaumont are among the top-drawers cast starring alongside Laurie Brett.



Waterloo Road, Monday, BBC1, 11.15pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

10,000 BC, Channel 5, 10pm

Not to be confused with Roland Emmerich's prehistoric namesake epic, this spin on the Big Brother formula was inevitable at some point. Take a bunch of eclectic strangers, dress them like extras from Hammer classic One Million Years BC, and film them as they attempt to survive in the wild, without Wi-Fi or take-out. In the final episode, there are just six days to go. Following Paul's departure from the experiment and Mike ill in the medic tent with possible liver damage, four people remain in camp. New leader Mel is working harder than ever in Mike's absence, and is concerned that she will be the next one to crack. Alas, things go from bad to worse when a sudden frost leaves foraging impossible.

TUESDAY

MasterChef BBC1, 9pm

New series. John Torode and Gregg Wallace return to put more keen cooks to the test. The first five hopefuls begin by serving up their Calling Card, a dish that showcases their talent – and this year, it carries a prize as the judges' two favourites will sail through to the third round. Then it's new challenge the Reinvention Test, in which they create a new plate of food based on their main ingredient from the first

round, before one goes home and the rest cook dinner for a trio of former MasterChef champions.

Nurse

BBC2, 10pm

If you note Paul Whitehouse's name in a new comedy, the chances are you're going to pay a certain degree of attention – and, rest assured, you won't be disappointed here. He stars in this comedy, adapted by David Cummings and himself from their Radio 4 series of the same name, about a community psychiatric nurse on her rounds as she visits her patients in their homes. The comic explains: "Nurse is a project close to my heart, it's an opportunity to explore issues and characters at a deeper level, while trying to find humour and hope in difficult situations." Esther Coles stars as Liz, the nurse, while Whitehouse takes on roles including an agoraphobic and a soldier with post-traumatic stress disorder.

WEDNESDAY

24 Hours in A&E Channel 4, 9pm

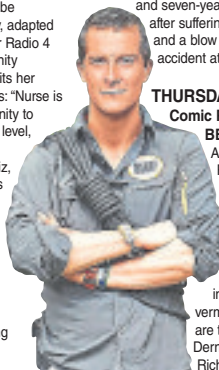
For most of us, a hard day at the office includes little more than one's email playing up and the coffee machine running out of cups. So spare a thought for the people featured in this series,

following life in a busy A&E department – where matters of life and death are a daily constant. This week, the staff help Nikki, 50, and her mum Angela, 68, after they are involved in a serious road traffic accident, leaving both of them with several complex injuries. Meanwhile, 53-year-old Ellen arrives at the unit after falling over in a shop and injuring her elbow, and seven-year-old Jack is rushed to hospital after suffering an open fracture to his arm and a blow to the head as a result of an accident at a wedding.

THURSDAY

Comic Relief: Operation Health BBC1, 9pm

As part of this year's Comic Relief, Lenny Henry leads a team of celebrities on a mission to rebuild a decrepit rural health centre in Uganda. What they find are semi-derelict buildings with no running water, no electricity and an infestation of rats and other vermin. As a result, many patients are too scared to stay the night. Can Dermot O'Leary, John Bishop, Richard Hammond, Steve



Bear Grylls: Mission Survive, Friday, ITV, 9pm

Mackichan and Greg James give the centre the kiss of life it so desperately needs?

FRIDAY

Comic Relief – Face the Funny BBC1, 7pm

Red Nose Day returns with an evening of entertainment to raise money for disadvantaged people in the UK and Africa, and this year the fun comes live from the London Palladium. Lenny Henry and Davina McCall kick off the first hour of laughs, which includes Rowan Atkinson in a new Mr Bean sketch. At 8pm, David Walliams joins Davina as co-host, and from 9pm, Davina and John Bishop present a brand new Little Britain sketch.

Bear Grylls: Mission Survive ITV, 9pm

As the remaining six celebrities pass the halfway point of the 12-day mission, they are starting to toughen up, but with one suffering from mosquito bites and another requiring treatment for trench foot, life in the jungle is beginning to take its toll. Arriving at a two-mile cave system, the contestants have to eat tarantulas' legs for breakfast, before using their rope skills to navigate the tight spaces and waterfall descents ahead, keeping a lookout for snakes, bats – and their dinner, a fresh pig carcass that Bear has hidden somewhere in the cave.

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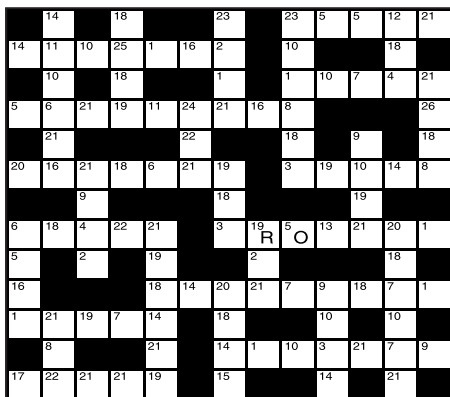
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Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	O	R	F	S	I	V	G	X	M	P	Q	U	N
14	D	A	E	Z	Y	C	W	T	L	J	K	H	B

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

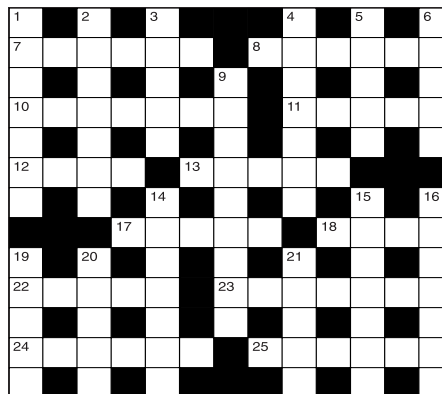
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Odd description of something rough (6)
- Not French apparently, but it could be (6)
- At length speaks of details (7)
- Admit defeat and throw it in (5)
- Has wrongly won a point (4)
- New bread out of its wrapping (5)
- Pronounce as absolute (5)
- It becomes inflamed by the lash (4)
- Raffle a number, in a manner of speaking (5)
- Never finishing, due to lack of time? (7)
- This boat may be tied up (6)
- Figure it's all round (6)

Down

- Open exit (7)
- He has a fish for curing (7)
- Likely to snap under pressure (5)
- Stories about raids (7)
- Opinions wives expressed differently (5)
- Be quiet with a beer or a mineral (5)
- Property conveyance? (6,3)
- Studio that is later converted (7)
- Soaked in the deepest concoction (7)
- Lead on? (7)
- Choose to make a fuss over physical exercise (5)
- A month in advance (5)
- Large quantities out of shape (5)



Quick Clues:

Across

- Foreign (6)
- Fold (6)
- Full (7)
- Cast (5)
- Location (4)
- Tranquillity (5)
- Commonplace (5)
- Rip (4)
- Stir (5)
- Sundry (7)
- Comrade (6)
- Hide (6)

Down

- Quell (7)
- Contend (7)
- Tendon (5)
- Introduction (7)
- Swift (5)
- Edge (5)
- Faulty (9)
- Liberty (7)
- Enthusiast (7)
- Give (7)
- Surly (5)
- Hector (5)
- Cost (5)

Sudoku

				5	9		8	1
	1	7			4			
5			1			6		4
6	3	2		7			1	
				8		7		
				6		5	4	2
4		6						8
				4		1	2	
7	8		3	2				

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

2	4	8	1	3	9	5	7	6
6	5	9	7	4	2	3	1	8
3	7	1	6	8	9	4	2	5
5	9	7	2	1	8	4	6	3
4	2	3	5	9	6	7	8	1
1	8	6	4	7	3	2	5	9
7	3	2	6	8	4	1	9	5
8	1	5	9	2	7	6	3	4
9	6	4	3	5	1	8	2	7

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Cadet; 4 Stirrup; 8 Outfits; 9 Slice; 10 Shop; 11 Terriers; 13 Chit; 14 Knot; 16 Pendant; 17 Brag; 20 Shrug; 21 Allegro; 22 Silence; 23 Put up. Down: 1 Cross purposes; 2 Ditto; 3 Trim; 4 System; 5 Insuring; 6 Raiment; 7 Pressure group; 12 Michigan; 13 Control; 15 Innate; 18 Fight; 19 Clap. QUICK - Across: 1 Obese; 4 Benefit; 8 Trivial; 9 Clear; 10 Fate; 11 Crotchet; 13 Deep; 14 Very; 16 Impaired; 17 Idea; 20 Naive; 21 Curtail; 22 Elector; 23 Glass. Down: 1 Out of patience; 2 Exist; 3 Evil; 4 Belfry; 5 Niceties; 6 Freshly; 7 Turn the tables; 12 Sediment; 13 Deprive; 15 Fencer; 18 Drama; 19 Pig.

Quiz

- What is kerosene called in the UK?
- Who ranks immediately below Lord Chief Justice?
- In which Australian city was Prince Charles rushed by David Kang?
- How is paralysis agitans otherwise known?
- Which US secret society was formed in 1866?
- How is the rose bay shrub otherwise

known?

- In which religion is nirvana the attainment of perfect serenity?
- Which two countries share the Pindus Mountains?
- Which English writer's first novel was Crome Yellow?
- Of which great orchestra was James Galway a member from 1969-75?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Jimmy Carter; 2 Tottenham

Hotspur; 3 Parsifal; 4 Cribbage; 5 John

Gummer; 6 F R Leavis; 7 Speed skating; 8

DNA; 9 Flamenco; 10 Southern Cross.

Niner: PARCHMENT

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

639 gives an animal,
53124 gives a snake,
23178 gives a bird.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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Opportunity to buy a penthouse apartment



THIS unique penthouse apartment within a period conversion in Malt Mill Lane, Halesowen, is for sale through Robert Oulsnam at £174,950 with no upward chain.

It has an entrance hallway, an open plan lounge, kitchen and dining area, a bathroom, bedroom one with a walk-in wardrobe/dressing area and a further bedroom with a walk-in wardrobe/dressing area. There are night storage heaters and hot water is provided by a system within the bathroom. Contact Robert Oulsnam on 0121 4299986 or visit www.oulsnam.net website.



Victorian end of terrace has plenty of potential



A SPACIOUS and attractive Victorian end of terrace four-bedroomed home in Eagle Street, Penn Fields, Wolverhampton, has tremendous potential for other uses. It is for sale through Jackson Lile & Close at £190,000.

It has a porch, reception hall, two living rooms, rear inner hall, cellar, breakfast kitchen with an oven, separate hob, canopy and wood-effect ceramic floor tiling, a rear lobby and ground floor bathroom.

There are four first floor bedrooms and a shower room and a courtyard garden, kitchen gardens, large garage, utility/store and WC.

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HALESOWEN, Newton Court £725 pcm+Fees
A recently converted 3 bedroom ground floor apartment finished to an extremely high standard and centrally located with commuter links to Halesowen and Birmingham. Featuring 2 double bedrooms, both with fitted wardrobes, 2 bathrooms, 1 single bedroom, 2 extra rooms downstairs, secondary glazing throughout. Allocated parking. Viewings recommended. EPC: C



HALESOWEN, Melbourne Road £675 pcm+Fees
Within walking distance to Halesowen, is this 3 story town house. Well worth an inspection inside and set within a quiet cul-de-sac, comprising of: 3 bedrooms, large fitted dining kitchen, very large lounge, downstairs wc, house bathroom with shower, double glazing, gas central heating, off road parking for 2 cars and garage, close to local schools and college. EPC: E



ROWLEY REGIS, Fairbourne Avenue £675 pcm+Fees
Perfect for a family and close to the M5. A large Mucklow Style detached home which is available now, close to local shops and bus routes. Featuring 2 double bedrooms with fitted wardrobes and 1 large single bedroom, 2 good size lounges, large kitchen, downstairs wc, shower room, gas central heating, new windows, huge rear garden, driveway and garage. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Sunbury Road £650 pcm+Fees
Set in a quiet cul-de-sac and in the catchment area for Windsor High School. Featuring 3 bedrooms, 1 large lounge, dining area, modern kitchen, downstairs bathroom with shower, low maintenance rear garden, driveway parking. EPC: B/C



HALESOWEN, Downing Street £650 pcm+Fees
Most delightfully improved semi detached home in popular location, with gas radiator heating and double glazing, internal inspection essential. Comprising: Porch, hall, large lounge, modern fitted kitchen/utility, 3 good bedrooms with further loft room, super re-fitted bathroom, large pleasant gardens. EPC: C



BARTLEY GREEN, Lapal Manor Court £595 pcm+Fees
Unfurnished 1st floor modern luxury apartment. Gas central heating, large open plan living room/fitted kitchen. 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower. Secure electronic gated property with allocated parking. EPC: B



LYE, Chapel Street £595 pcm+Fees
A 3 bedroom unfurnished or part furnished to suit detached property which has been totally renovated to a very high specification and must be viewed to be fully appreciated. This lovely home has entrance hall, 2 reception rooms, breakfast kitchen with all brand new appliances, large downstairs bathroom with shower, extra separate w.c., 3 double bedrooms, gas central heating, maintenance free garden, on road parking. Available immediately. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Ladysmith Road £550 pcm+Fees
A mid terraced house in a sought after area for Colley Lane Primary School, bus links to Halesowen and Stourbridge. This house features 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen with oven/hob, dining area, new downstairs shower room, 2 good size bedrooms, double glazing, gas central heating, rear garden. EPC: B/C



HALESOWEN, Witton Bank £550 pcm+Fees
A well presented 2 bedroom 2nd floor apartment in a very sought after location. Having secure intercom entry, entrance hall, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower, large lounge, kitchen, garage in block and communal gardens. Available immediately. EPC: C



CRADLEY HEATH, Meadow Walk £550 pcm+Fees
Modern semi detached house within a popular residential area featuring gas central heating, spacious living room, modern fitted kitchen, downstairs house bathroom, 3 good size bedrooms, large rear garden, driveway parking for 2 cars. Available immediately. EPC: E



HALESOWEN, Mount Street £550 pcm+Fees
An immaculate semi detached house within minutes of Halesowen Town Centre. Featuring gas central heating, spacious living room, modern fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, house bathroom with shower, rear garden and on road parking. EPC: C



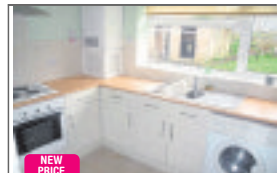
HALESOWEN, Malt Mill Lane £535 pcm+Fees
An unfurnished mid terraced house, within walking distance to Blackheath Town Centre and not far from Rowley Regis train station, briefly comprising of: 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen, downstairs shower room, 2 double bedrooms. Benefits include rear garden, off road parking. EPC: D



DUDLEY, Lantern Road £525 pcm+Fees
A beautifully presented mid terraced house close to local amenities. Featuring 2 bedrooms, modern fitted kitchen, spacious lounge, double glazing, gas central heating, rear garden and patio area, allocated parking. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Bloomfield Street North £525 pcm+Fees
An unfurnished semi detached house within walking distance of Newfield Park Primary, Windsor High School and Halesowen College. This property features 2 reception rooms, 2 double bedrooms both with fitted wardrobes, downstairs bathroom with shower, upstairs shower room, fitted kitchen, gas central heating, double glazing. EPC: E



KIDDERMINSTER, Keats Place £485 pcm+Fees
A well presented 2 bedroom ground floor flat, having accommodation including: hall, lounge, refitted kitchen with appliances, 2 bedrooms, bathroom, gas central heating, double glazing and cul de sac location. Virgin Broadband connection is available. Own entrance to the property. EPC: C



TIPTON, Ferguson Drive £495 pcm+Fees
A lovely modern ground floor part furnished apartment, briefly comprising of: 2 bedrooms with wardrobes, spacious lounge with sofas etc, fitted kitchen with appliances, bathroom with shower, electric storage heating, double glazing, 2 allocated parking spaces, communal gardens, internal viewing recommended. EPC: D



TIPTON, Ferguson Drive £480 pcm+Fees
A lovely modern 2nd floor apartment, briefly comprising of: 2 bedrooms, spacious lounge, fitted kitchen, bathroom with shower, electric storage heating, double glazing, 2 allocated parking spaces, communal gardens, internal viewing recommended. EPC: C



HALESOWEN, Belgrave Road £450 pcm+Fees
A large ground floor modern apartment within walking distance to Blackheath Town Centre and local buses. Featuring a spacious lounge, fitted kitchen with oven/hob, 1 double bedroom, newly fitted bathroom suite with shower. Gas central heating, small rear garden with private entrance. Available Now. EPC: B/C



ROWLEY REGIS, The Link £425 pcm+Fees
Located close to the M5 J2 is this quiet and spacious unfurnished ground floor apartment, briefly comprising of electric storage heating, open plan living room/fitted kitchen with white goods, 1 double bedroom with built in wardrobe, house bathroom with shower, parking space to rear. EPC: C



CRADLEY HEATH, Great Western Drive £385 pcm+Fees
A very well presented 1st floor apartment in a well sought after location. Ideal for Old Hill Train Station, local shops and bus links. The apartment features a great size lounge with a 2 seater sofa, coffee table and bookcase, modern kitchen, bathroom with shower, allocated parking for 1 car, communal gardens to the rear. EPC: B/C



LYE, High Street £375 pcm+Fees
Fully refurbished in the centre of Lye. This spacious 2nd floor apartment features a lovely lounge, 1 double bedroom, bathroom, modern and contemporary kitchen/ diner, electric heating, double glazing, on road parking. Available now. EPC: E



X hits the spot for Fiat

By David Banner

Fiat has expanded its highly successful 500 franchise in the shape of the dinky 500X SUV.

The Fiat 500X joins the crossover fray, offering a neat and stylish extension of the 500 franchise. With a choice of front or all-wheel drive, some modern diesel and petrol engines and some aggressive pricing, this one's going to be extremely popular.

The front-wheel drive models will doubtless prove more popular with British buyers who are about as likely to take the 500X off-roading as they are to send it round the Nurburgring.

You'll need to pay attention to the badging.

A 500X Cross Plus has all-wheel drive but a 500X Cross merely looks as if it does. This being Fiat, we get a range of excellent engines right from the get-go.

The petrol engines comprise a 109bhp 1.6-litre E-torQ and the more sophisticated 138bhp 1.4-litre Turbo MultiAir2 unit.

Go diesel and you're looking at the smooth 118bhp 1.6-litre MultiJet II for front-wheel drive applications and the 138bhp 2.0-litre MultiJet II if you want four-wheel drive, the latter being mated to a nine(!)-speed automatic transmission. The manual 'boxes get six speeds, unless you're looking at the entry-level 1.6-litre E-torQ transmission, which makes do with five ratios.

Fiat has also developed 168bhp 1.4-litre and 184bhp 2.4 petrol powerplants for this car, both with the auto and all-wheel drive.

The 1.6-litre diesel that will attract most footfall here in the UK is respectably brisk, getting to 62mph in 10.5 seconds, while delivering a 320Nm slug of torque.

The all-wheel drive models aren't designed to handle quite the same terrain as the related Jeep Renegade (which gets additional underbody strengthening), but there are tight approach and departure angles and reasonable 179mm of ground clearance that will help drivers tackle light rough terrain. That compares to 162mm you get on front-wheel drive models.

The 4x4 500X models are also equipped with specific bumpers and protective skid plates to protect the bodywork and mechanicals from the rigours of off-road use.

Original

The 500X's curvaceous roofline and windows is instantly reminiscent of the original Cinquecento. It's certainly something we can imagine proving very popular indeed, and which will give its rivals plenty to worry about.

There will always be resistance to any manufacturer that extends the scope of a retro reissue beyond that of the original car.

People lambasted MINI for doing just this with cars like the Countryman and Paceman, but if the job is done well, the buying public does come round.

The 500X certainly looks the part and continues a long tradition of small all-wheel drive Fiats, so it's not just a bit of a wheeze dreamed up by some kid in the marketing department with the ink still wet on his MBA certificate.

The styling is neat and assured, it fills



'Fiat has priced it aggressively, equipped it generously and it's got room enough inside to fulfil that crossover remit.'

a genuinely useful gap in the range, succeeding the Sedici, and the engineering that underpins it is all reassuringly right and exact.

Fiat has priced it aggressively, equipped it generously and it's got enough room inside to fulfil that crossover remit. In other words it's an extremely compelling package.

Prices start at £14,595.

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Finance example: Nissan Micra 1.2 16v (79bhp) Acenta+ 3dr, Cash Price £3995, Deposit £300, Amount of credit £4695, Fixed interest rate 6.25% Flat rate, 11.8% APR, 60 Payments of £80.83 (£18.66 per week) Total amount payable £5149.80 (Excludes £150 Document fee and £150 Completion fee, Subject to status)

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Hot-hatch icon reborn in race car for the road

Commercial feature

After a five year wait, 2015 sees the arrival of the world's keenly anticipated hot hatch, the Honda Civic Type R. Billed as a 'race car for the road', the all-new Civic Type R will set new standards in the high-performance front-wheel drive hatchback segment.

The production version of Honda's latest hot hatch icon was revealed for the first time at the 85th Geneva Motor show this week.

Type R vehicles have garnered a cult following around the world and the new model more than lives up to the high expectations. A world-first application of Honda's new 2.0-litre VTEC TURBO engine, aggressive function-led styling, and pioneering new chassis technologies combine to deliver one of the most immersive and rewarding driving experiences available in any sector.

The new 2015 Civic Type R will be powered by the most extreme and high-performing engine in the 22-year history of the red 'H' badge, signalling the start of a new performance era for the Honda brand.

At the heart of the Civic Type R is an all-new, direct-injected turbocharged 2.0 litre Vtec Turbo petrol engine, which delivers power, torque and performance figures unmatched in the front-wheel drive hot hatch segment. Peak power output is 310PS at 6,500rpm, and peak torque is 400Nm at 2,500rpm – both higher than for any previous Honda Type R model.

Red-lining at 7,000rpm, the engine – part of Honda's next-generation Earth Dreams Technology series – features an advanced new turbocharger with Vtec technology that boosts low-end torque and delivers sustained acceleration.

The Civic Type R's blistering performance is unmatched in the front-wheel drive hot hatch segment: the 0-to-100km/h (62 mph) sprint is covered in just 5.7 seconds – making it the fastest accelerating performance front-wheel drive hatchback – and top speed, where permitted, is a class-leading 270km/h (167 mph).

Rewarding

The new engine is mated to a slick-shifting six-speed manual transmission, safeguarding an intimate, rewarding connection with the drivetrain, and power is directed through the front wheels.

The styling changes that are unique to the Civic Type R give the car an aggressive, purposeful stance, yet almost all have a functional purpose. The sleek and aerodynamically-efficient design reflects a car developed to perform at speed. The focus on aerodynamics has ensured high-speed stability and high levels of downforce.

To achieve this aim, the Civic Type R was subject to exhaustive aerodynamic analysis, testing and development. The development team tirelessly pursued its objectives through computer-based CFD modelling and wind tunnel testing at Honda's dedicated automotive motorsports facility in Sakura, Japan; home of Honda's Formula One engine development.

A new, almost completely flat underside aids airflow under the vehicle and combines with a rear diffuser to optimise downforce – effectively 'sucking' the car onto the road.

The rear wing has been reimagined from the Type R Concept. The structure of the airfoil – its angle, height and shape as well as its vertical end plates – have been carefully engineered to optimise downforce without causing a significant increase in drag at higher speeds. This helps improve road-holding abilities, particularly through high-speed corners.

A wide front splitter and deep side skirts also manage airflow and reduce lift, while the front bumper has been shaped specifically to inhibit air turbulence around the front wheels, enhancing high-speed stability and reducing lift forces.

To help the driver manage the Type R's power, the car is equipped with a high performance Brembo brake package, developed specifically for the car. A number of innovative new suspension systems, unique to the Type R, have been introduced to produce rewarding handling characteristics and to maximise power transfer to the road.

The new Civic Type R will mark the debut of the new '+R' button that increases the response of various chassis and drivetrain systems. The result is an even more intense driving experience, ideal for the track and for the genuine sports-driving enthusiast.

When +R mode is activated, engine responsiveness is heightened, with torque-mapping changed to a more aggressive and performance-focused setting. Steering receives reduced power assistance and is therefore more responsive to driver inputs, and basic damping force from the new four-point Adaptive Damper System is increased by 30 per cent. This means the behaviour of the car is firmer and more agile for high-performance handling.

The all-new Honda Civic Type R will go on sale across Europe from this summer. Full vehicle specifications will be announced in due course.



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All about high-end luxury as old and new combine

By Matt Kimberley

There's a new guy in town with an old name, one that might just ruffle a few feathers at British favourites Bentley and Rolls-Royce.

The Maybach name is back, and this time it means business. The old standalone Maybach was flawed from the very beginning, built as it was on a platform old enough to have been shared with the Ark. But what you see here isn't a Maybach: it's a Mercedes-Maybach.

It's the new flagship Mercedes S-Class, built under a double-barrelled name that could, if consumer demand is there, mirror the Mercedes-AMG badge with multiple models atop various ranges. AMG cars are built for high-end luxury and giggles, but the Mercedes-Maybach is all about comfort and exceptional indulgence.

It's a long old thing, adding another 20cm between the wheels compared to the long-wheelbase S-Class. So no, it's not short of legroom. The roofline is higher and stays that way for longer, the rear doors are a different length and there are small 'double-M' badges on the C-pillars.

Stalwart

The force is strong with the finest S-Class, and always has been. Apparently customers wanted more exclusivity and even more of the stuff that makes the S-Class such a stalwart at the top of its class, so Mercedes has combined the famous badge with another one to form the new standard-bearer. Where the old Maybach had image problems, its spiritual successor has big-time pedigree – albeit in a less showy way.

Nit-pickers will note that part of the boot is taken up by the fridge unit, but being able to keep your champagne chilled is clearly far more important. To drink it there are two silver-plated champagne flutes in a fold-down tray between the two rear seats – but only if you specify the £7,200 First Class rear seat set-up.

There's enough legroom to allow your St Bernards to curl up at your feet, and they'll be comforted by the standard luxury lamb's wool floor mats that replicate an expensive living room feel. You're actually meant to take your shoes off to appreciate it (and it's totally worth it).

To be frank, few owners will actually drive it themselves, but if they did they'd be astonished at how relentlessly fast it is thanks to a 530-horsepower V12 engine. Refinement and comfort in any seat is amazing, with the softest leathers and seats that, in the rear, can give you six different types of back or shoulder massage. Six! And don't forget seven colours of ambient lighting, of course.

Comfy

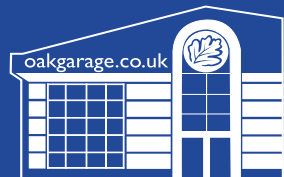
Heating, cooling and up to 43.5 degrees of backrest tilt are also rather nice, but it's the leg rest that steals the show. Hold a button down and the front passenger seat moves forwards, the leg rest rises and you eventually find yourself as comfy as if you were in your own reclining armchair at home. Probably comfier. All the toys you'd expect on the 'king among S-Classes' are standard. Go forth and meddle.

When you look at what you get, £167,000 is a steal. Bear with me on this. The big double-M is built as well as a Bentley but has more technology and is arguably even better to drive. The only thing it lacks is the statement-making looks of a Rolls-Royce, but not everyone wants those.

Who would buy one? Media moguls, Mafia kingpins, ultra-exclusive chauffeurs and more will all want to get their hands on a Mercedes-Maybach, although only 100 or so will sell in the UK every year. Any S-Class is a brilliant luxury car, but the new maestro is a bit special. Below-the-radar on the outside but above all but the loftiest of expectations, this is the sober thinker's Rolls-Royce Ghost.

This car summed up in a single word: Impressive.

If this car was a vineyard it would be one of the Champagne region's finest: magnificent to behold and full of rich bounties.



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01384 940260 / 01922 283460
666383 / 01384 455900

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pets corner

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2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

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5 Business & Farming

business opportunities

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business directory

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7 Jobs

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6 Property

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mobile homes

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overseas property

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A 3x3 grid of images illustrating different modes of transport. The top row shows a train, a tunnel with a bright light at the end, and a blue bus. The middle row shows a woman driving a car, a map of Europe, and a commercial airplane. The bottom row shows red stadium seats, a white motorhome, and a large cruise ship.

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1. *Journal of Management Studies*, 1990, 27, 1, 1-14.

APPENDIX

MEPS

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1. *Journal of Management Studies*, 1997, 34, 1, 1-14.

10

St

COL

What are the property market

References

Express & Start



GET CUSTOMERS MOVING ADVERTISE

Advertisements in local newspapers and websites are the most popular way of keeping an eye on the property market

SOURCE: The Newspaper Society - Consumer Catalyst 2014

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Local Specialists

37
Halesowen Chronicle
Thursday, March 6, 2015

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Women seeking men

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ALISON, 27 busty, shapely lady seeks fun only with broad minded man. Aca. Tel No: 0905 002 1961 Box No: 416073

KATHERINE 33, pretty blonde would love to get intimate with outgoing, fit guy who is also looking for fun relationship with no strings. Aca. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416197 ☺

SUSIE, discreet married lady, young 36yrs seeks uncomplicated times with man any age or area, all texts answered. Box No: 4459437

FEMALE fun brunette, attractive, 26, seeking male for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416287 ☺

FELICITY, professional female, 32yrs, blonde, curvy, fun. Travels a lot and wtm chap for occasional fun on my travels. Box No: 4459438

PAT 5ft 2ins, medium build, attractive, blonde hair, widow, seeking N/S, sincere gent for friendship and days out. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416057

LINDY, 43yrs young, married with husband away. Seeks discreet gent any age/area for no strings. Box No: 4459439

ALICE 36, tall and slim with long brown hair, outgoing and sporty seeks funny, intelligent guy to share active days and cosy nights. Age/looks not important. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416087 ☺

EILEEN 49, lovely brunette, adventurous and eager to please seeks intelligent male to share the fun side of life together. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416521 ☺

GORGEOUS slim brunette lady 5ft 5, seeks attractive man 30-46. Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4644639

CHRISTINE 48, shy sensitive brunette looking for lively older male to make her smile again and bring back some passion. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416519 ☺

MATURE female seeks male penpal (any age) for literate friendship. Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4647759

BEAUTIFUL full figured, down to earth black woman, 37, looking for some serious fun with an experienced, confident, older guy. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416499 ☺

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel No: 0905 002 1883 Box No: 413399

SINCERE lady, seeks similar gent, widower preferred, 60-67, 5ft 6ins, so slightly taller than me. N/S, car owner and likes a dog. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416471

ADVENTUROUS sexy lady, 38yrs, married but seeks no strings fun with discreet man, any age. I'm tall, slim and dominant. Aca. Tel No: 0905 002 1937 Box No: 415301

KAREN 5ft 5ins, blonde hair, blue eyes, slim, seeks male. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416337 ☺

ANNE, mid 40's, cheerful busty curvy affectionate real woman! Seeks gent, any age or looks for nights mine. Tel No: 0905 002 1953 Box No: 410291

JUNE 50, beautiful, funny, warm, young looking blonde WLTm attractive down to earth male for no strings fun, laughter and love. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416299 ☺

DISCREET lady, 42yrs wants to make you happy, come to me and let me do that for you. Aca. Tel No: 0905 002 1957 Box No: 409901

ATTRACTIVE professional widow, 73, WLTm sincere caring gent, widower for friendship, meals in, conversation and to put a smile on our faces. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415951

FIONA, young 32yrs, seeks uncomplicated fun with chap any age or area, texts only please, I'm nervous on the phone. Box No: 4495861

KAREN 50, widow, 5ft 5ins, blonde hair, blue eyes, slim, seeks gent with GSOH, loving, caring and understanding. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415871 ☺

RACHAEL, 36yrs, looking good for my age but need some daytime excitement. All texts answered. Box No: 4507091

GEM 34yr old pretty brunette with lovely big eyes and nice skin, many interests, WLTm kind tallish male, 30-50yrs for serious relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415571 ☺

JENNI, sensual lady, 23yrs seeks mature experienced man for no strings, daytime fun. Box No: 4459440

DIANE 37, sensual, tactile and loving seeks tall male for interesting conversations and cosy intimate nights together. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416085 ☺

SALLY, 36yrs, married but husband works away seeks discreet gent any age for fun only. Box No: 4492484

BRIDGET 48, voluptuous, seductive and very saucy, seeks male for lots of T.C and to make very happy in return. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416083 ☺

SAMANTHA, solvent, sensual business woman, 38yrs, travels a lot and seeks fun on the road. I'm married so please be discreet. Box No: 4495859

ATTRACTIVE tall, dark, professional gent. GSOH, likes sports, socialising, good company, seeking female with GSOH for laughs, conversation and maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415969

JASMINE, 22yrs, seeks older gent for daytime meetings as she works a nightshift most days. Box No: 4495860

Men seeking women

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34YR old slim, dark haired, creative, adventurous, likes music, cycling and photography, seeks likeminded female to share fun and happiness with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 352753

PAUL 56, works part time, seeking nice lady, 55-65 with GSOH, honest, genuine and understanding. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416017 ☺

JAS 40, looking for attractive young female for good times and socialising. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415805 ☺

STEVEN 64, WLTm princess to see if the frog king really works, caring, considerate, N/S preferred. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416417

JAMES, 45yrs, solvent caring gent, recently divorced seeks genuine lady to wine and dine. Single mums welcome. Box No: 4459441

MALE seeking fun bubbly female, 21-30. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415473

PHIL 57, OHAC, discreet, seeks no strings fun with younger female. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414991 ☺

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ROY 6ft 2ins, late 50's, seeks female. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414775 ☺

ALAN 49, seeks lady for discreet no strings fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 413757

MALE 69, laidback, easy going, GSOH, likes golf, nights in, seeking lady, 65-72 for relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416029 ☺

NICK 52, 6ft, slim, genuine, seeking slim female for relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415881 ☺

GENT 53, 5ft 11ins, brown eyes, distinguished, seeking attractive lady, 30-45 for discreet fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415809

MATURE male, 6ft, GSOH, fit, active, loving, honest, N/S, seeks female with similar qualities. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414261 ☺

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EXTREMELY genuine! Life's true gent, 54, slim, 5ft 10ins, blue eyes, short hair, N/S, GSOH, seeks female, 41-52. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 413925 ☺

MALE 47, medium build, seeks female, 40-50 for fun and friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415651 ☺

SEAN looking for female to share a coffee, pub, clubs and more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414549 ☺

GENUINE friendly, N/S professional, honest gent, medium build, GSOH, good heart essential, seeks equivalent lady, 45-60 for company and conversation. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414311

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Reanne could face snooker's top men

DUDLEY'S Reanne Evans is three wins away from playing against snooker's leading men at the World Championships after accepting an invitation to the qualifying tournament.

The 10-time ladies' world champion would be the first woman to reach the main draw at the Crucible if she made it through next month's qualifying rounds.

The 29-year-old from Dudley could meet a legend of the men's game in qualifying after the invitation list was broadened.

"It shows that everybody gets a chance if they work hard enough and can achieve their dreams," said Evans.

THE invitation list for the World Snooker Championship has been broadened to give all previous winners a chance to grab one of 16 places to join the world's top 16 in the televised stage.

It is rumoured that 1985 champion Dennis Taylor and 1986 victor Joe Johnson could be interested in joining fellow former winners such as Steve Davis and John Parrott, plus six-time runner-up Jimmy White, in the qualifiers at Ponds Forge, Sheffield, from April 8-15.

Snooker's governing body, the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA), has revamped the qualifying rules for its showpiece tournament, which take place in Sheffield from 18 April to 4 May, in an effort to broaden its appeal.

All players seeded outside the top 16 will start in the same round, with a total of 128 players competing in the qualifiers. This has opened up extra placesto any former world champions.

Hughes bows out of darts in second stage

TIPTON'S Jamie Hughes bowed out of the BDO World Darts Trophy at the second round stage upon his return to televised arrows.

The Black Country thrower had impressed at the first hurdle on Friday night, with a 6-0 white-wash of Japanese opponent Hiroaki Shimizu.

That brought him back to the oche on Saturday night to take on Stefaan Deprez, who had stunned two-time BDO world championship finalist Tony O'Shea in the first round.

But Hughes was defeated 7-4 as proceedings reverted to the best of 14 legs, leaving him unable to capitalise on progress this year.

His exit at Manchester's Event City, with the Eurosport cameras on hand, was tempered by his third ranking title in January.

Boss calls for fans to fill the ground

WOLVES boss Kenny Jackett has challenged the Molineux masses to come out in force and fill the ground to help the promotion bandwagon back on course this Saturday.

Head coach Jackett issued a rallying cry to fill Molineux for the visit of his former club Watford after Tuesday's disappointing 2-1 setback at Bournemouth.

The lure of a 5-0 win against Rotherham failed to prevent a seasonal low of just 17,744 turning out for the last home game against Fulham, albeit for a freezing Tuesday night when they had to compete with the Manchester City v Barcelona Champions League tie live on TV. The Fulham turnout was the

lowest for a home league fixture for almost a year, since 17,041 watched the 4-2 win against Colchester on Tuesday, March 25 last season.

It was also more than 4,000 down on Wolves' average home gate this season of 21,957, a figure just 168 higher than when the team was relegated to League One in 2012-13.

Ideally, Jackett wants a repeat of the 30,000-plus that filled the ground for the Rotherham game on Good Friday last April, although the reality is a crowd of around 21,000 this weekend after two sell-out away trips.

"We'd always look to fill the place if we possibly could - that's our aim," said the boss. "I definitely

think the potential is there. Wolves have a recent Premier League history and it's a first class stadium with terrific facilities.

"The potential is certainly there for big crowds here if you're successful."

Molineux crowds are five per cent up on the 20,860 that watched them in League One last term, but they remain seventh highest in the Football League behind Derby, Norwich, Brighton, Nottingham Forest, Leeds and Sheffield Wednesday.

Jackett is delighted with the fans' backing, but admits performances influence the size of the crowd. "It's our aim to improve it and get the crowds as big as we possibly can."

Hales sweet victory over Bournville side

Bournville 10 Old Halesonians 39
THERE was no doubt this would be a tough game against a Bournville side desperate for points.

A mixture of rushed moves, bad decision making saw nothing to show for 20 minutes pressure.

The home side were ecstatic with their defensive effort, but it was more lack of finishing that was hindering Hales. On the 21st minute after numerous phases by the pack, the ball was finally sent through the hands to winger Patrick Luftkin, who raced over in the corner for an unconverted try to lead 0-5.

The second period of the first half continued with Hales pressure but with no score, Bournville were lifted by this.

Hales suffered the loss of player/coach Mark Evans with a rib injury, he was admirably replaced by the consistent James Sadler on the back row.

Converted

The home side took advantage close to half time and from a lineout scored a well-worked, converted try as the ref blew for half time.

The half time chat by Coach Mark Evans left the players in no doubt as to what was required in the second half to keep pace.

The players responded, Hales set off at a rate of knots and immediately got their game together.

After one minute of the second half, Carl Robinson sprinted from 40 metres for an unconverted try to lead. Hales Prop, Louis Padian, was forced to leave the field with a knee injury, replaced by Tom Dempsey. Not long after that Dempsey was given a yellow card for a suspect high tackle. Then came another blow for the visitors when skipper, and the other Prop, Rich Taylor appeared to fracture his jaw and left the field. The visitors were forced to introduce uncontested scrums due to insufficient front row players and as the laws dictate, they had to continue with a player short. On 47 minutes Chris Hooper scored and converted a try.

Bournville found themselves in the Hales half on 52 minutes, and were awarded a penalty which took the score to 10 - 17. Wing Warren Oliver scored followed by fellow wing Pat Luftkin, Hooper converting. Pete Fitzgerald scored a



Chris Hooper who did more than his fair share of scoring in the game goes on the run

great try, Hooper converted and them sealed the win with a drop kick.

The Hales team have suffered telling injuries in this game and will need to regroup ready for another defining game away against Bromsgrove on Saturday, kick off 3pm.

Old Hales 2nds did not play - Newport withdrew from the friendly game.

Old Halesonians 3rds 34 Kidderminster 2nds 19

Old Hales 3rds faced a youthful Kidderminster second teamat Wassell Grove.

Old Hales' No.8 Steve Deakin scored after only five minutes. Gaz Price converted.

Liam Kendrick collected the ball and powered over for a try from short range.

Lee Davis then scored from five metres out. Gaz Price added the conversion.

On 23 minutes Old Hales scored their fourth try.

Wolves can't shake off the Cherries away bogey

Bournemouth 2 Wolves 1
BELOW-PAR Wolves looked to be victim of two poor decisions as they suffered a deserved defeat at Bournemouth on Tuesday night.

A double from burly striker Yann Kermogant which sandwiched a fine reply from Benik Afobe six minutes before the break was enough to end Wolves' hopes of a fourth straight win.

And although they could have few complaints at the outcome, TV footage appeared to show Richard Stearman's lunge on Callum Wilson for the match-winning penalty in the 49th minute was outside the area.

In addition, there was an unpunished handball in the area by defender Tommy Elphick from Bakary Sako's late free-kick on a night when only Afobe and Kevin McDonald really shone for the white-shirted visitors.

But apart from the 15 minutes before half-time, Wolves were largely second best to a slicker Bournemouth outfit. Afobe's equaliser their only serious attempt on goal.

Boss Kenny Jackett made two changes to the side that beat Cardiff 1-0 on Saturday as Matt Doherty and Nouha Dicko were recalled in place of Dominic Iorfa and Jack Price, which saw Rajiv Van La Parra switch from up front to wide right.

Doherty got his reward to return at right-back after a solid half an hour at Cardiff when he replaced Iorfa, who looked like being sent off, while Kevin Doyle was back on the bench. Wolves were chasing a slice of history - their first ever away league win there.

TD let lead go to get share of the points

Team Dudley 1 Trysull 1
AFTER a free weekend Team Dudley entertained Trysull at The Dell Stadium.

Trysull have the meanest defence in the division, three of the 23 goals that they have conceded were actually in the reverse fixture as Team Dudley ran out 3-2 winners that day, their eighth place standing though shows how unforgiving this league can be if you don't have enough throughout the team.

Second-from-bottom TD grabbed a point towards West Midlands Division One survival with a 1-1 home draw against Trysull.

Nathan Jones fired them in front after 48 minutes when he ran on to a James Hill pass and shot past keeper Mark Reach. The lead lasted three minutes, with Mark Cartwright heading home.

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Cup clash will be a cracker, says Morley

VILLA legend Tony Morley is predicting an FA Cup cracker when Tim Sherwood and Tony Pulis clash again in part two of their derby double-header.

The sides meet in an FA Cup quarter-final at Villa Park on Saturday just five days after Villa's thrilling last-gasp victory in the Premier League.

And former Villa and Baggies winger Morley reckons the dramatic ending to Tuesday's game will add extra spice at the weekend.

"I think Tuesday will make Saturday's game even better because Albion will be hurting and Villa will be given a boost by getting those three points," said Morley.

"I don't know what will happen on Saturday but it should be an interesting game.

"I'm really looking forward to it. "The Cup final at Wembley is there. It's within sight now.

"Whichever team wins this game just needs a good draw in the semi-finals and they have a great chance of getting to the final and having a great day out for the fans and the players."

Morley, who won the League championship and European Cup during four years at Villa before spending two spells with Albion in the 1980s, was an interested spectator at Villa Park on Tuesday as Christian Benteke's stoppage-time penalty handed the hosts a priceless win.

He said: "Over the 90 minutes you couldn't deny that Villa deserved to win. "West Brom came and set their stall out as you would expect.

"They were well organised and hard to score against but over the first 45 minutes Villa were by far the better side.

"For 20 minutes in the second half Albion won all the individual battles.

"They (Villa) needed a penalty to win it but they definitely deserved it."

Brummies' Perry is delighted with team's loyal fans

BIRMINGHAM captain Tom Perry held his annual pre-season event in the West Midlands recently – and has thanked supporters for their continued backing.

A night of speedway chat and live entertainment was enjoyed by a crowd of more than 100 in Cradley Heath, on the same night Perry also unveiled his 2015 merchandise.

A grand total of £1,055 was raised at the event and the 22-year-old was delighted with the amount.

"For the third or fourth year running, it's another fantastic sum of money and I can't thank everyone enough," said Perry.

"Even though, I've already got all of my main new equipment and new race suit, I'll be putting the money towards all of the other essentials that I need for the new season.

"It was mainly Cradley fans who came as it was nice and local for them, and even though I'm not riding for them this year, they still came and supported me and I really do appreciate that.

"It was good to see a few Birmingham fans make it too."

Heathens fans to get look at new team

CRADLEY Speedway fans will get their first chance to see the new-look team in action next week.

The Heathens are chasing a third successive National League title at their new Perry Barr base after making the switch from Wolverhampton during the winter.

And the team, with four new signings, will be put through their paces next Wednesday, March 11.

They will be on track from 2pm for the press and practice session which greets the start of every season and members of the public are welcome to attend. That same evening the team and

Speedway

management will be at Brierley Hill's Copthorne Hotel to meet fans and sponsors from 8pm – and the 2015 race jacket will also be revealed.

Heathens boss Will Pottinger said: "Now it's getting close we are all very excited about the new season.

"It's a great time of the year and me and the boys are looking forward to the evening at the Copthorne."

Michael Neale, one of the club's new signings, is counting down the days to the new campaign.

He said: "I'm just really keen to get back on the bike now and I can't wait for the season to start.

"I've been working hard to try and get everything ready and I'm feeling prepared, I'm just excited to start riding again and pull on a Heathens race jacket."

Admission is £5 for the Copthorne event with all money raised going to the riders to assist with pre-season machinery expenditure.

The new Heathens race jacket will be on display. Tickets are available from the club shop on Quarry Bank High Street (Printworx) or from cradleyheathens.co.

YELTZ LET THE LEAD SLIP AWAY

Halesowen Town 2 Ashton United 3
PLAY-OFF chasing Ashton struck three goals in eight minutes at the start of the second half to complete the double over Halesowen.

But it was Halesowen who took a fifth minute lead to end their goal-drought with an own goal when visiting captain Jason Gorton turned Tom Tonks's cross into his own net.

Gorton's fortunes worsened when he was replaced due to a head injury.

Home goalkeeper Matt Sargeant came to Halesowen's rescue twice by saving from Kevin Leadbetter and Martin Pilkington before Joe Hull and Asa Charlton both went close in further Yeltz pressure late in the first half.

But the Robins turned the game on its head to punish Halesowen in a dramatic twist immediately after the interval.

Lee Rick curled home a 20-yard equaliser into the top corner in the 48th minute with the Yeltz defence slow to clear before Pilkington shattered the Yeltz with a sparkling brace to give Ashton a 3-1 lead.

Shrugged

Pacy Pilkington drilled home a long clearance from his goalkeeper Paul Phillips in the 50th minute and then shrugged off Charlton to slam home his second goal from the edge of the area just three minutes later.

The Yeltz pulled a goal back in the 66th minute when Hull helped on another long Tonks throw-in and Aaron Griffiths swept home at the far post.

Three further efforts from Tonks, Ben Haseley and Charlton were cleared off the Ashton line.

Halesowen Town: Sargeant; Green, Griffiths, Forde, Hull (c), Tilt, Charlton (Turner 82), Tonks, Christie (Bragoli 76), Haseley (Daniels 76), Jones. **Unused Subs:** MacKenzie, S. Pearson (GK).

Ashton United: Phillips; Wilson, G. Pearson, Gorton (c) (Haslam 19), Higgins, Young, Rick, Gee, Johnson (Oates 80), Pilkington, Leadbetter (Robinson 77). **Unused Subs:** Hill, Sherratt.

Flood gates open to drown DK



DK's Danny Hawkins bursts clear from Lichfield's chasing pack during the match

Lichfield 69 DK 18

DK were forced to field a patchwork three quarter line, made up predominantly of forwards.

In the sixth minute the hosts' flanker Cullum Turner crossing for the opening try.

DK came back when Jamie Hearn made no mistake with a penalty kick.

The home side were finding it difficult to break out of their own half, however in a rare sortie into DK territory the ball was worked to winger Dan Rowlands to score. The try went unconverted.

In the 34th minute the home side were penalised and Jamie Hearn again scored. On the

stroke of half time the home side gained possession which led to No.8 Richard Burton crossing for a try. Luke Massey added the extras.

Within two minutes of the start of the second half Lichfield gained possession and prop Danny Poole crossed for a try. Massey converted. DK clawed their way back into the game with a try by winger Nick Adams. Hearn converted.

DK were beginning to miss tackles and Lichfield took advantage to cross for an unconverted try. In the 55th minute prop Rich Kelly scored for DK.

On the hour the flood gates opened and Lichfield ran in another six tries, five converted.

Late penalty priceless for battling Villa

Villa 2 Albion 1

CHRISTIAN Benteke's stoppage-time penalty gave Villa a priceless Premier League victory and momentum ahead of the second chapter of the derby double-header.

Saïdo Berahino's second-half equaliser looked set to break Villa hearts only for Benteke to score from the spot with almost the final kick of the game after dreadful goalkeeping from Ben Foster.

Berahino struck on 66 minutes to put the Baggies within seconds of a point despite a display that was well below-par in the first of their two visits in five days to Villa Park.

Villa had led through Gabby Agbonlahor's 22nd-minute strike and they should have been out of sight before Berahino proved to be 'Johnny on the spot' for his 18th goal of the season.

Agbonlahor could have had a hat-trick as Tim Sherwood's men dominated but he was thwarted by a goalline clearance by Joleon Lescott, a fortunate save from Foster and a rebound off the woodwork.

But it mattered not after the late drama that gave Villa a huge three points in their quest to stay in the top flight.

Albion received a major pre-match boost when leading scorer Berahino was declared fit after a foot injury and strike partner Brown Ideye overcame a knee problem.

The pair, who both limped off during Saturday's 1-0 win over Southampton, both started as boss Tony Pulis named an unchanged team for the third game in a row.

Villa made one change with former Albion loanee Scott Sinclair dropping to the substitutes' bench as Charles N'Zogbia was given a starting berth.

The first few moments were scrappy with Albion looking to get Ideye in behind the Villa back four.

Shinnie's shot puts the Blues ahead

Blues 1 Blackpool 0

ANDREW SHINNIE'S 36th minute header was enough to give Birmingham City a 1-0 win over struggling Blackpool in the Championship.

In a dour St Andrew's clash the mid-fielder provided a moment of relief for Blues when he connected with a through-ball from Robert Tesche to beat Tangerines keeper Elliott Parish.

The Seaside's did manage several attempts on goal but rarely threatened to show why they seem destined for the drop.

The win lifted Blues into a comfortable 13th place.

★★★

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